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DEVOTION

TO THE

Holy Infancy of Our Lord Jesus Christ ;

OR,

NEW MONTH OF JESUS.

By C. L. FAUCHER.

TRANSLATED BY

M. J. PIERCY.



“ Non est in alio aliquo salus. Nec enim aliud nomen est sub cœlo datum hominibus, in quo oporteat nos salvos fieri.”

LIVERPOOL :

ROCKLIFF & SON, 50, CASTLE-STREET ;

BURNS & LAMBERT, C. DOLMAN, & T. JONES, LONDON ;

RICHARDSON & SON, LONDON AND DERBY ;

AND JAMES DUFFY, DUBLIN.

MDCCCL.

APPROBATION.

WE have much pleasure in giving our approval to the publication of the following devout little treatise, entitled "Devotion to the Infancy of our Lord Jesus Christ," or, *New Month of Jesus*; and earnestly recommend it to the habitual use of the faithful of our district.

We confidently hope that whoever peruses it with a humble and docile disposition will, as the prophet *Isaias* says, "Draw waters" of eternal life "with joy out of the Saviour's fountains," (*Isaias*, vi. 12,) and feel his heart begin to glow with the warmth of those Divine flames which our Blessed Saviour came to enkindle on earth, and which burn so brightly in the heart of the Author.

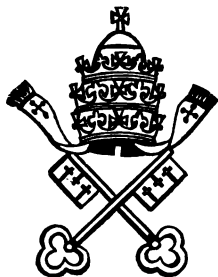
*Given at Bishop Eton,
September 8, 1850.*

✠ GEORGE, BISHOP OF TLOA,
VICAR APOSTOLIC OF THE LANCASHIRE DISTRICT.

✠ WILLIAM, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA,
VICAR APOSTOLIC OF THE NORTHERN DISTRICT.

In accordance with the wish of the Translator, I have revised her version of the *Month of Jesus*; as far as I can form a judgment of the work, it appears to me to be an inestimable gem, which all who love Jesus Christ will wish to possess, and to wear for his sake.

ROBERT HOGARTH, G. V.—Y. D.
Burton Constable, 1st Sept., 1850.



TO THE

Right Rev. Dr. Brown,

BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL,

AND

ADMINISTRATOR OF THE DIOCESE OF SALFORD.

This Work is Dedicated,

AS A TOKEN OF SINCERE RESPECT,

BY HIS

HUMBLE SERVANT,

M. J. PIERCY.

November 1st, 1850.



PREFACE.

“LET him who loves not our Lord Jesus Christ be anathema,” says the Apostle St. Paul.

Is it possible to refuse our love to a God who has so much loved us, without rendering ourselves guilty of the blackest ingratitude, and consequently deserving of the heaviest punishments? For if the Son of God descended from heaven to live amongst us in this valley of tears, if he willingly partook of our miseries and infirmities, it was in order that we being made sensible of so much goodness and mercy, should live for him alone.

In short, all relating to him loudly demands our love. His cradle, his poverty, his sufferings, his passion, his cross, his death, all speak to us in these affecting words: “My son give me thy heart.” (Prov. xxiii. 24.)

Can we then resist such pressing invitations, and refuse our love to a God who deserves it by so many titles? What can

PREFACE.

be more capable of enflaming our hearts with Divine love, than frequent meditation on the love which he has shown in making himself our equal, and subjecting himself to all our infirmities? What more capable of exciting the most lively gratitude than reflections on the numerous proofs of his goodness and mercy towards us.

It will be by meditating on the mysteries of the Divine Infancy, and the life of Jesus, that we shall find our hearts warmed with that generous love which will render us strong and constant in the practice of virtue.

I venture, therefore, to offer to the public this course of meditations on the Infancy of our Lord as the most efficacious means of exciting their love towards their God and Saviour. I have endeavoured to furnish simple and touching reflections, and I pray that Almighty God will bless this little work, which I have undertaken for no other object than his greater glory.

PRACTICE

OF DEVOTION

To the Infancy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTHING is more consoling to a Christian than meditation on the mysteries evinced by the fact of a God being made man for the love of us. We therefore exhort the faithful to pursue with fervour the exercises of Devotion to the Holy Infancy of our Saviour, which are contained in this little book, as efficacious means of disarming the anger of God, and of obtaining the grace of a sincere conversion.

For the Eternal Father having given us his Divine Son, to be the expiatory victim of our iniquities, we may justly hope that, when we present ourselves before him, offering the merits of this Divine Mediator, his love and compassion for us will be excited. Will not his mercy be moved at the voice, at the tears, at the sufferings of this Beloved Son, who from his cradle will solicit our pardon?

Let us place all our confidence in the merits of Jesus; whether we be of the number of the just, or sinners, let us all hasten to the cradle of this Divine Infant. There we shall understand all that he has done for us, and, penetrated with the most lively gratitude at the sight of so much love, we shall exclaim: "Who would not love a God who has so much loved us?"

DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEVOTION.

I.—If the Devotion to the Infancy of our Lord is not established in the parish church, it would be well for those who wish to practice it, to prepare, in some retired apartment, an altar, and place upon it, an image of the Infant Jesus, for external appearances serve greatly to inspire fervour and pious sentiments.

II.—The first Meditation should be made on Christmas Eve, all those who desire to keep the Month of Jesus in common, having assembled in the chapel intended for this Devotion should recite, or sing, if it be possible, the Litanies of the Holy Infant Jesus, after which, he who presides at this ceremony, should read the Meditation slowly, stopping a few moments after each point, in order to reflect on the truths therein proposed, and indulge the pious sentiments which have arisen from the subject.

III.—Each Meditation is commenced by the Preparatory Prayer, O Divine Infant, &c., &c.

IV.—The Meditation being finished, it must be followed by the little Prayer which comes after, and which resembles the paraphrase of a versicle from the Litanies of the Holy Infant Jesus. This versicle will serve as an ejaculatory prayer, or aspiration to be often remembered and repeated during the day, in order to retain the pious sentiments caused by the Meditation, and also to renew the holy resolutions therein made. This will prove the means of drawing fruit from the Devotion.

V.—The exercise will conclude with the Prayer which is found at the commencement of the book, and which the first words are: “O Jesus, living in Mary,” &c., &c.

VI.—All those who keep the Month of Jesus should propose to themselves to acquire some particular virtue, or correct some particular fault: and for this reason a pious practice is inculcated after each Meditation.

VII.—The Month of Jesus is concluded by the Act of Consecration, which will be found at the end of the Meditation: this last exercise should be performed with the greatest solemnity and devotion.

PREPARATORY PRAYER

BEFORE EACH MEDITATION.

O Divine Infant! I come to prostrate myself at the foot of your cradle, to adore you as my Saviour and my God. You came into this land of exile to partake of my miseries, to soothe my sorrows, and to be the faithful companion of my pilgrimage. Grant that I may draw from your example consolation in my sufferings, and that strength which is necessary for me in the numerous dangers by which I am surrounded; give me your grace that I may correspond with the good sentiments, and execute the holy resolutions with which I may be inspired during this Meditation.

O most Holy Virgin, permit me to join with you in rendering homage to this Divine Saviour. Offer to him my vows and my necessities, and obtain for me the grace to imitate him on earth, in order that I may love him with you eternally in heaven.

PRAYER.

To be said at the Conclusion of each Meditation.

O Jesus, living in Mary! come and live in our souls, in your spirit of holiness, in the plenitude of your power, in the truth of your virtues, in the communion of your divine mysteries: reign in us to the exclusion of the power of our enemies, in the efficacy of your spirit, and for the glory of your Father. Amen.

NEW MONTH OF JESUS.

FIRST DAY.

“ It came to pass that when they (Joseph and Mary) were there (at Bethlehem,) her days were accomplished that she should be delivered.”—Luke ch. ii.

FIRST POINT.

THE rich and noble who had repaired to Bethlehem, had filled all the inns of that little city when Mary and Joseph arrived there, in order to obey the edict of the Emperor Augustus, who had commanded his subjects to be enrolled throughout the whole extent of the empire. God who wished to confound, by the humiliations of his Divine Son, the wisdom of the age, and the pride of the world, permitted that the humble Virgin who was to bring his Beloved Son into the world, should find no other place than a poor stable into which she could retire.

Consider the patience and mildness with which the Blessed Virgin endured the unkind reception of the inhabitants of Bethlehem. She sought every where a place in which to pass the night, sheltered from the inclemency of the weather, she applied at every door, but was every where rejected, *because she was poor*. She was thus obliged to retire into a deserted stable, and remain exposed to all the severity of the wind and cold ;

yet she did not complain of the poverty or inconvenience of the place, but adored with humble submission the designs of Providence in her regard. O! you who can neither suffer privations nor support contempt without murmuring, or indulging sentiments which faith condemns, be confused at your pride and immortification, and take the resolution of loving opprobrium and humiliations, or at least of enduring them without complaint, and with perfect resignation to the will of God.

SECOND POINT.

Represent to yourself the Blessed Virgin as the tree of the terrestrial paradise which bears the fruit of life; go in spirit to the stable at Bethlehem, there you will find St. Joseph and a crowd of celestial spirits awaiting the birth of the Saviour, in order to announce to the world the happy tidings of salvation: adore in respectful silence; meditating on the wonderful mystery, so soon to be accomplished. See the love which inflames the heart of Mary; unite yourself to this pure virgin; desire with her to see, and to contemplate the *word made flesh*, the Messiah, in the expectation of whom the patriarchs rejoiced, and whom the prophets celebrated with enthusiasm in their holy canticles; join yourself in spirit with the holy angles who are preparing to celebrate this great festivity of God reconciled to man; rejoice with them, for on this day the Lord has looked with mercy on the earth; he has revoked the curse which he pronounced against it, on account of the sin of our first parents; justice and mercy have met; heaven and earth are united in an eternal alliance.

ASPIRATION.

Child Jesus, the Desire of Nations, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Holy Infant! object of the desires of heaven and of the sighs of the earth—Thou art also the object of my desires and affections. Come Divine Messiah, come to break my chains, come to put an end to my miseries, come to save me, a poor miserable sinner.

EXAMPLE.

The devotion which was felt in the first ages of the Church towards those holy places in which our Saviour worked out our salvation, induced the most holy and learned in the Christian world to visit Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Bethlehem was the object of St. Jerome's especial devotion. He passed there a great part of his life, residing in the monastery built by St. Paula, near the stable in which Jesus was born. Nothing can be more affecting than the picture which he has drawn of the little City of Bethlehem, and the piety of its inhabitants. Listen to his words: "What shall I say of the place where Jesus was born—where our Saviour's infantine sighs were first heard. Let us honour it by respectful silence rather than attempt an eulogium that can never be worthy of a place so august, so holy. Was it a gorgeous palace decorated by the magnificent taste of the proud ones of the earth, which the Creator of heaven and earth selected for his birthplace? Ah, no! Nothing is presented to our view but a poor humble shed, where neither objects nor sounds

can distract the soul from the sweets of solitude and recollection. A religious silence reigns in this place, which is only interrupted by chants and songs of praise in honour of our Lord. The husbandman, with his hand on the plough, entones the Hallelujah, the labourer lightens his toil by hymns and holy canticles, and whilst cultivating his vines, chants the sublime prophecies of David." Such are, continues the holy Doctor, "the sounds which are heard in these places; such are the canticles with which the shepherds recreate themselves whilst guarding their flocks, and with which the echoes of the valley resound."

Ah, how edifying was the piety of these happy inhabitants of Bethlehem, who knew how to sweeten their labours by the praises of the Lord, and to lighten their fatigues by prayer!

PRACTICE.

Sanctify all your actions by prayer, and perform them in union with Jesus Christ.

SECOND DAY, OR CHRISTMAS DAY.

"Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy;..... For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."— Luke, viii. 10.

FIRST POINT.

BEHOLD, on this day, the church summons all her children to rejoice with her on the birth of the Saviour. She calls upon the just to rejoice, for he is the Holy of Holies, who will re-establish the love of justice and innocence on the earth;

she invites sinners also to rejoice, for He has come, who will efface the iniquities of the world. Yes! whoever you may be, just, or sinners, you who are sighing in the midst of the miseries and afflictions of this life, dry up your tears, check your sighs, for unto you is born a Saviour, the Prince of Peace, who has come to change your sorrow into gladness.

Come, let us present ourselves before this Divine Infant; let us celebrate his praises; let our songs and hymns resound around his cradle, for he is our Saviour, he has come to redeem us. Daughters of Sion, cast aside your habits of mourning, resume your songs of joy, for the Lord has come to relieve his people from the heavy yoke of sin and misery.

Blessed be He who has descended from Heaven to live with us on the earth; praise and glory be rendered to Him for ever! Blessed be He who in his infinite mercy has visited us, and who, moved at the greatness of our miseries, became our equal in order to lighten them by suffering with us.

SECOND POINT.

Approach then with confidence this throne of love, approach without fear, unite your heart to that of this tender Infant, he will not reject but will kindly receive you. Do you not see how he already extends his little arms to embrace you? All in him announces love and mercy; what can you fear from an Infant weeping and sighing in a cradle?

He came into this world not to destroy but to save; not to condemn but to pardon; He will free

you from the heavy burden of your sins, and will bear the weight of your iniquities.

Oh! how admirable is this Divine Infant in his abasement! how strong in his weakness! how noble in his humility! Oh my Saviour, who would not love you! What can I desire more? O holy Infant I possess you, I embrace you with the warmest affections of my heart; accept it as your cradle—Oh my sweet Jesus, make me as humble, as patient, and as mortified as you were.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, born before the light; have mercy on us.

PRAYER.

O most mild and amiable Infant, thou who didst descend from thy throne of glory to live amongst us; thou whose delight is to be with the children of men, grant that I also may find my chief consolation in remaining near thee, and may my greatest pleasure be in converse with thee at the foot of thy cradle.

EXAMPLE.

St. Paula was descended from the most illustrious families of Greece and Rome. All that the world esteems and desires was united in her: nobility, wealth, and personal qualities. But far from rejoicing in, she despised all these vain earthly advantages, and embraced a poor and humble life, after the example of Jesus Christ.

She renounced all her possessions, distributed her wealth to the poor, and, desirous of attaining the highest perfection, she resolved to leave Rome, where the frequent communication which her

rank obliged her to hold with the world, deprived her of the sweets of solitude and recollection. She retired into Palestine in order to live there in humility and obscurity. Scarcely, however, had she arrived there than she repaired to Bethlehem. The sight of the stable and the crib of our Saviour reanimated her piety and fervour. Her lively and ardent faith represented to her all the circumstances attending the birth of our Saviour; she saw the Divine Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and bathing with his tears the straw on which he was laid; imagined she heard the concert of angles assisting at the Adoration of the Magi, and witnessed the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph lavishing the most assiduous care on the Divine Infant. Then, no longer able to restrain her tears, or calm the sentiments which agitated her, she exclaimed in holy transports of love, "Hail to thee Ephrata, thou fertile land of which God himself is the fruit; of thee the Prophet has said: And thou, Bethlehem, art not the least amongst the Princes of Judea, for out of thee shall come forth the Captain that shall rule my people Israel; He, who is from all eternity, the Prince of Peace." After having repeated many other passages of the Holy Scriptures, she added: "Oh! what happiness for me, a miserable sinner, to be able to venerate the crib in which my Saviour was laid, and the stable in which the ever Blessed Virgin brought him forth into the world! This shall be the place of my rest; here will I establish my habitation for ever."

She pronounced these words as if in a prophetic spirit, for she deserved, by her many virtues and the sanctity of her life, to be interred in the church

which was built over the grotto of Bethlehem ; as if there had been no place worthy to receive the body of this humble servant of Jesus Christ, but the very same in which the Son of God began to suffer those profound humiliations by which he has saved the world.

PRACTICE.

During the day frequently prostrate yourself in spirit at the foot of the cradle, and adore the Infant Jesus.

THIRD DAY.

“ Mary brought forth her first born Son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes.”—Luke, xi. 7.

FIRST POINT

HAVE the humblest amongst the children of men ever experienced such privations? What astonishing poverty ! The Divine Infant has scarcely any clothes to cover him ; the cold has already chilled his delicate limbs, and his tender mother eagerly bestows upon him her most loving and assiduous care. Who can express with what sentiments of respect and veneration she takes her Divine and Beloved Child in her arms. Her heart cannot contain the ardour of her love ; she contemplates him with the tenderest affection ; her soul is overwhelmed with wonder and gratitude.

O most Holy Virgin how rich you are in your poverty ! Jesus is your treasure, what more can you desire ? Oh ! how opposed is the Spirit of

God to that of the world! The world searches after wealth, and the pleasures of this life; Jesus seeks poverty, and cherishes privations. Ah! now I understand that to possess Jesus is to possess all things; and to be deprived of him is to be in the most abject poverty. Oh! how much better it is to be poor with Jesus, than to be rich without him! O my Jesus, from this moment, I renounce all my luxuries and all my false pleasures; I only ask to live in poverty with you, and to die for the love of you.

SECOND POINT.

Consider the condition which Jesus Christ chose on coming into this world, and the immense difference between what he is in heaven, and what he appeared to us on earth, between the stable, the place of his temporal birth, and the bosom of God the Father: in a word, between what he is as God, and what he was as a weak child. As God he was born from all eternity, "in the splendour of the saints." "In splendoribus sanctorum genui te." (p. 109.) As a child, he was born in the darkness which covers this land of misery; as God, he is surrounded by eternal glory; as a child, he was enveloped in miserable swaddling clothes; as God, he rules all, he sustains all; the pillars of heaven rest upon the strength of his arm, and his all-powerful hand sustains the foundations of the world; as a child, he was weakness itself, and he could not have supported himself had he not been carried in the arms of his Holy Mother.

O Holy Infant! not less amiable in your poverty and weakness, than you are when surrounded by the brilliant glory of your heavenly Father, not

less adorable in your cradle on the earth, than on your eternal throne in heaven, be always my only treasure, my wealth, and heritage in time and eternity.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, Father of the Poor, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Jesus! give me the spirit of poverty; thou art the Father of the Poor, accept me as thy child; thou hast said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit, detach then, I beseech thee, my heart from the goods of this world; grant that I may possess them as if I possessed them not, or that I may use them only as a means of serving thee in the persons of the poor, thy suffering members.

EXAMPLE.

During the first years of my priesthood, says the Abbè Carron, I was passing one day through the suburbs of Rennes, when I heard mournful sighs proceeding from a stable: I entered, and looking through this wretched place, saw a poor child covered with ulcers from head to foot, expiring on a bundle of straw. O my child! I exclaimed, how I pity you! how great must be your sufferings! What can I do to relieve you? Sir, replied the child, in a dying voice, but with angelical sweetness, why do you pity me for my sufferings? There is no cause to pity me. It is for God that I endure these sufferings, and they are very sweet to me, when I think that He himself

wished to die for me. But, my little friend, why then were you weeping a few moments ago? Alas! I felt myself dying, and I wished to die with the good God in my breast.

I interrogated the interesting child; he knew the prayers of a Christian; he repeated several times, in my presence, in the most affecting accents, these words: "*Our Father who art in Heaven.*" His innocent heart was inflamed with an ardent love of Almighty God; and with eyes full of tears he earnestly besought me to give him the Holy Communion before he expired. I eagerly hastened to comply with his ardent desires, and caused him to be removed from his wretched hut into more comfortable shelter. After a few short instructions, this child of benediction felt and understood the immense benefit and happiness he was about to receive; a faint colour illumed his pale and livid face; his dying eyes brightened with joy; he kissed the crucifix in transports of love; he wept bitterly for the frailties of his infancy, and more earnestly repeated his entreaties that he might be allowed to receive his God; at length I placed the Holy of Holies on the lips of this terrestrial angel: his eyes sparkled with holy joy, his heart palpitated with love; he would have spoken but could not; I allowed him for some moments to indulge in his holy transports, then approaching his bed, I asked: my dear child are you happy now? Oh my father, in Paradise, yes in Paradise with all its delights! I am dying with joy and happiness! Saying this he sank down as if in a sweet sleep—His happy soul had taken its flight to heaven.

PRACTICE.

Support privations with resignation, and suffer with great love for God; it is the most effectual means of softening and lessening all our miseries.

FOURTH DAY.

“ And laid Him in a manger.”—Luke, ii. 7.

FIRST POINT.

Who is this poor infant who has no bed but a manger and a little straw on which to repose? Nothing distinguishes Him from other children, but his extreme poverty—yet this Infant is the Son of the Most High, the Universal Heir of God his Father, the Almighty, the God strong and admirable, the Redeemer of the world, the Saviour of men. Who, then, has deprived him of his Sovereign greatness, and reduced *Him* from whom all good proceeds, to this utter misery? The love which he has for you—for you he was born in this stable; for you he was laid in this manger; for you he reposes on this straw. What excess of love! What ineffable charity! Who can comprehend it? And what have you done to correspond with such infinite bounty? What have you suffered for his glory, or for his love? Do you expect to merit Heaven by indulging in luxury, in vanity, and in the delights of this world? See if these are the things which Jesus teaches you from his humble crib.

O my Jesus! the poverty of your stable affects me far more than the magnificent palaces of the

great ones of the earth; ah! how my heart is agitated to see you weeping in your humble crib! how precious to me are your tears! Permit me, Divine Infant, to mingle mine with yours; ah! how sweet and consoling it is to weep here with Jesus! All the pleasures of the world cannot produce in the soul such delights as the tears shed at the feet of Jesus.

SECOND POINT.

Consider this poor crib which contains the treasure of Heaven, the ransom of the world, the joy of angels and men; see by what humiliations Jesus would cure your pride; see how he condemns the love of the things of this world; and how he reproveth all the labours you have hitherto taken to acquire them at the risk of your soul's salvation.

Prostrate yourself at the foot of the crib of this amiable Infant, regard it as an altar on which you must make to God the sacrifice of yourself; offer to him all the powers of your body, all the faculties of your soul, to serve and love him; abandon all your luxuries and conveniences; sacrifice to him all those vanities to which you have until now been so firmly attached; tell him that you wish to be entirely his. Confess to him with the greatest confidence all your deviations from the paths of virtue, and say to him with humble simplicity: O Jesus! O my Saviour, until now I have never thought of earthly things or despised them, as I ought; I have esteemed and sought after the wealth of this world; I have placed all my happiness in worldly enjoyments, but now you teach me that all my felicity consists in de-

taching my heart from this world to unite it to yours. I now see that I have been labouring under a heavy burden which has retarded my progress towards the celestial country; but now my sentiments are changed, I will no longer say with the world: Blessed are those who possess riches; but I will love to say with you, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven:" Blessed are they, of whom the Lord is the dearest, the only treasure.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the sole treasure of thy Holy Mother, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Jesus! who, notwithstanding thy extreme poverty, listened to the prayers, and fulfilled all the desires of thy Holy Mother, grant that I may never desire or seek after anything but thee, and that I may never lose thy holy love for the sake of acquiring the false enjoyments or riches of this world.

EXAMPLE.

A great sinner, terrified at his condition, wished to be converted; but sin had so hardened his heart that he could not weep for his iniquities in the manner he wished. Devoured by remorse of conscience, and overwhelmed with sadness, he one day left home, going he knew not whither, in order to seek for consolation, when he saw at his gate a poor man whose misery appeared extreme. He was deeply affected by it, and remembering those words of our Saviour, "*that he would regard*

as done to himself whatever should be done to the least of his," he took the poor man into his house, and after having bestowed upon him a bountiful alms, he threw himself at his feet; and as if he had been in the presence of Jesus Christ, whom his faith taught him to honour in the person of this poor man, he fervently exclaimed, "O Lord Jesus, whom faith teaches me to honour in the person of this poor man; I would give you my heart, but it is so hard and so stained with crimes that I dare not present it to you. Accept, at least, the alms I have offered for your love, and change my heart." This humble prayer was so powerful before God that the sinner's heart was softened; he wept bitterly for his sins, and from this very moment, God granted to him abundant graces, the fruits of his faith, and the recompense of his humble charity.

PRACTICE.

Honour Jesus in the person of the poor, and perform, during the day, some work of charity.

FIFTH DAY.

"And this shall be a sign to you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger"—
Luke, ii. 12.

FIRST POINT.

Go into the palaces of kings, you will discover the new-born Prince by the luxury and pomp which surround him; gold, and all that is most precious blaze around him, and his cradle will be worthy of the throne which he is one day to occupy. But in order to discover the new-born Saviour, the God of Heaven, he whom royal David calls his Lord and Master, no other sign is given you but the manger in which he is laid; the straw which forms his bed, and the poor clothes which cover him; in other words, you will behold a being similar to your own, and poverty far exceeding yours; for what mother is there so poor, who would give to her child a manger for his cradle? Who is the new-born babe who has only a little straw on which to rest? Jesus,—for it is he alone who is reduced to this extremity; and it is by this sign that he wishes to be known. If it had been his will to display his majesty and power, what a brilliant crown might have surmounted his brow, and what precious stones would have enriched his cradle! But all this vain glory was unworthy of him. For this reason he despised and condemned it; and by this condemnation he has classed it amongst those pomps of the devil which all those who would belong to him must renounce.

SECOND POINT.

Infancy and swaddling clothes, the stable and the manger, are then the signs by which we shall know Jesus, because they are so many marks of his love for us; and the more unworthy they appear to be of his Sovereign greatness, and infinite majesty, the more they prove to us his tenderness and mercy. Ask then no more why Jesus, in coming into this world, chose to be born as a poor Infant; St. Chrysostom will reply that he made himself a child to gain your love. And what is there more lovely than an Infant? Its innocence, its simplicity, its caresses, all speak to, and captivate our affections. Oh! if you consider attentively the child Jesus laid in his cradle, can you resist his charms? Will not the attractions of this Divine Infant be sufficiently powerful to gain your heart? What more affecting than those sighs and those tears by which he earnestly pleads for your pardon, from God his Father.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, our Brother, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O my Divine Saviour! if I desire that thou shouldst acknowledge me as one of thine, when thou comest again in glory to judge the living and the dead, I must acknowledge thee as my Saviour in the weakness of infancy, and in those infirmities with which thou didst load thyself for my sake, for if I blush before men at the humiliations which thou enduredst for the love of me; thou wilt also blush for me and confound my pride

before thy Father, and in presence of all the celestial court. Preserve me, O Divine Infant! from so great a misfortune; grant that I may place all my glory in confessing thy holy name before men, in order, that having adored thee as my Saviour and my God, under the veil of infirmity, I may see and contemplate thee surrounded by infinite glory, in a happy and never-ending eternity.

EXAMPLE.

Whilst the world was groaning under the tyranny of Dioclesian and Maximian, heaven was peopled with martyrs—no day passed without the sword of the tyrant being dyed in the blood of numerous victims. Maximian especially distinguished himself by his hatred of, and cruelties to the Christians.

There was then in the Roman army a legion called the Theban, entirely composed of Christian soldiers of tried valour, of courage superior to every danger, but of invincible faith. The Emperor Maximian having ordered that the whole army should unite in offering sacrifice to the Gods, and take new oaths contrary to the laws of Christianity, they refused to obey this impious order. The Emperor informed of their general resistance, was so indignant that he commanded the legion to be immediately decimated, by lot, so that each tenth soldier, to whom the lot should fall, was to be immediately put to death.

But the sight of this barbarous punishment, so far from intimidating those whom the ballot had spared, only increased their ardour, and they exclaimed that they would all endure death, rather

than renounce their faith. "Prince," said they, addressing Maximian, "we are, it is true, your soldiers, but we are also the soldiers of the true God; we cannot then obey you when you order us to abjure our faith. If we receive pay from you as a recompense for our services, we have also received gratuitously from God, life, and all that we possess; we owe to you military service, to God we owe our innocence. We are bound by a two-fold oath of fidelity, the one binds us to God, and the other to our Emperor: if we violate the first by an infamous apostacy, can you depend upon our observance of the second? We have arms in our hands, but we shall not resist; we prefer dying innocent, to living guilty." The cruel Emperor, irritated by this noble remonstrance, caused them to be decimated a second time, but in vain. Despairing of being able to vanquish their noble constancy in the faith, he ordered them to be surrounded by the rest of his troops, who massacred them all, to the number of six thousand six hundred.

PRACTICE.

Never blush to own yourself a Christian, or shrink from the performance of your Christian duties, influenced by worldly motives.

SIXTH DAY.

“ And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock.”—Luke, ii. 8.

FIRST POINT.

THE shepherds, in accordance with the customs of their ancestors, the holy patriarchs, were watching their flocks by night, in a place called the Tower of Ader, which name signifies tower of the flock, where Jacob and David had formerly tended their sheep, and it was here that the angel announced to them the birth of the Saviour.

Let us see who they were to whom the Son of God, the Sovereign Monarch of Heaven and earth, announced his birth: they were shepherds, men of poor and humble station, but who were leading pure and innocent lives; these the angels visited, and they received the first favours of the Infant Jesus.

How infinitely humble is Jesus! he willingly communicates himself to lowly and simple people; he is poor, and he calls the poor around him; the noble and the powerful ones of the earth would not acknowledge him, in the humiliating condition to which his love for mankind had reduced him, but the shepherds adored him as their God, and offered to him their sincere homage; no proud or presumptuous spirit blinded, or prevented them from acknowledging in the Holy Infant the Messiah promised to their Fathers.

SECOND POINT.

Jesus chose poor shepherds to announce his birth to the world, as he afterwards selected poor fishermen to announce his gospel, and to constitute them the apostles of the nations. O Holy Infant! how impenetrable are your judgments! how far from the thoughts of men! Who would not despise the grandeur, and trample on the vain honours and dignities of the world? For it is not on those who possess and love those things, that you bestow, O my God! the rich treasures of your grace and love, but upon those who despise and reject them. You regard with greater complacency and mercy, the humble and the poor, than you regard the proud and the rich. Why then dost thou, my soul, despise the simplicity of the poor, since God honours and rewards it? Why be disgusted at its homeliness, since Angels visit it? For God has not chosen, says St. Paul, to the first Christians, the great and powerful of the earth to communicate himself to them, but he has called the humble and the weak. "The foolish things of this world hath he chosen to confound the wise; the weak things of the world to confound the strong, that no flesh should glory in his sight.

ASPIRATION.

Child Jesus, Omnipotent in weakness, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Infant Jesus! thou who art the all powerful God, assist me to triumph over all my passions,

to subdue my pride, which is constantly rising in rebellion against thee; grant me grace to comprehend that true greatness consists in humility, and that the more humble I am before men, the more exalted I shall be before thee.

EXAMPLE.

St. Hedwiges, Princess of Poland, had so much reverence for the poor, that she frequently washed their feet and then gave them alms. She had several who always sat at her table, and whom she served before seating herself. Often when she thought herself unnoticed, she would kiss the footsteps of the poor, and she loved them so tenderly that she would purchase from them the pieces of bread which they had begged; and venerate it as the bread of angels, and as a sacred thing.

She had also constantly in her suite thirteen of the most necessitous poor, in honour of Jesus Christ and his Apostles: she carried her love for them so far, as to wash and kiss their ulcers and wounds; she employed the whole of her revenue in comforting and relieving such of her subjects as were in need; in short, she was the mother of the unfortunate, and in her, they always found a protectress and support. Her love for poverty and humility was so great, that she constantly wore the poorest and coarsest clothes. Some person having told her that they were not suitable to her rank, and that she had much better give them to the poor: If these clothes offend you, replied the saint, I am ready to correct my fault; and immediately she laid them aside, and took others more

in accordance with her station. By virtues such as these she gained the affection and admiration of her people, and attained the highest sanctity.

PRACTICE.

Resolve to apply yourself seriously to the practice of humility, and allow no day to pass without performing some acts of this virtue.

SEVENTH DAY.

“And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them; and the brightness of God shone round about them: and they feared with a great fear.”—Luke, ii. 9

FIRST POINT.

WHEN Almighty God visits a soul he enlightens it with his grace, and it is by this divine light that it begins to see and to know God. Let us beg of the Infant Jesus, who is called the Sun of Justice, the light which enlightens every man coming into the world, to enlighten our minds with his Divine rays, and to enkindle in our cold hearts the holy flames of his Divine love; he is so merciful that he causes his Sun to shine equally on the good and on the wicked, on the just and on sinners; he rejects none, it is only those who obstinately close their eyes to his light and truth who remain in darkness. Let us then often address to him this prayer of the Royal Prophet: “O my God! enlighten my eyes, dissipate the darkness which surrounds me, in order that I may never sleep in death the sleep of sin; grant that

the enemy of my salvation may never boast and say: I have prevailed against him, behold I am his master, and can dispose him as I will."

SECOND POINT.

Human nature banished from heaven, and in its sinful state, ever feels astonished with whatever is Divine: therefore were the shepherds seized with sudden fear when the Angel appeared to them; it was also a generally received opinion, amongst the Jews, that none could behold a celestial messenger and live. After having seen the Angel who had been sent to him from God, Manue said to his wife, "We shall most certainly die, because we have seen the Lord." Let us beg of the Infant Jesus to inspire us with that salutary fear which is the beginning of wisdom; that fear with which St. Paul tell us we must work out our salvation; that filial fear which produces true charity; that fear full of confidence, which warms instead of chilling the heart; that fear which makes us generous in the service of God, and causes us to fear sin, more than any misfortune; so that we should prefer to lose all things, rather than His grace and friendship.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, thou who wieldest the lightning of Heaven, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Divine Infant! inspire me with the fear of thy judgments, in order that it may be for me a preservative against the seductions of the world, and the deceitful attractions of sin. I know that

all power has been given to thee; that thou wilt one day be my judge, and either reward me with life eternal, or pronounce upon me the sentence of everlasting death: I tremble at this thought; but I am comforted when I reflect that thou wert my Saviour before thou becamest my judge. All my hope is in thee, O Holy Infant! By confiding in thy goodness I shall not be deceived; thy infinite merits will cancel all the debts I have contracted to the justice of God thy Father.

EXAMPLE.

St. Vincent Ferrer relates that a young man who had lived many years in sin, was transported, in a dream, before the tribunal of God. He was so struck by the majesty of the Sovereign Judge, by the different questions which were put to him, and to which he could not reply, that he awoke in a profuse perspiration. Affrighted at the recollection of what he had seen, he said to himself: "All that I have seen in my dream will be one day realized, perchance even to-day. What folly to expose myself, by obstinacy in sin, to appear defenceless at this terrible judgment, and to see myself condemned without hope." Sincerely repenting, he wept bitterly for his past sins; thanked God for the warning which had been given him, and formed a resolution rather to die a thousand deaths, than again commit mortal sin. His terror during this terrible vision had been so great, that in one night his hair had become white as snow.

PRACTICE.

Frequently think of your last end, and say to yourself whenever you are tempted to commit any

sin: "If I were to be summoned before the tribunal of Almighty God after this action, what should I do?"

EIGHTH DAY.

"And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God."—Luke, ii. 13.

FIRST POINT.

IMMEDIATELY after the Angel had ceased speaking to the shepherds, a multitude of the heavenly host joined him in praising God. Oh! what a delightful concert was theirs! If you cannot offer to Jesus a love so pure or ardent as that of these blessed spirits, join at least your voice to theirs in singing the mercies of the Lord, and publish every where the praises of the Divine Infant, who was born in a stable for your salvation. Oh! when will the happy day arrive when we shall form but one family; one society with all the heavenly spirits, ever praising and blessing God thrice holy? In expectation of this, how long does the time appear! yet we ought not to murmur, for Jesus comes to partake of our exile and our miseries; he will be with us until the consummation of all things, as a good Father surrounded by his children: who then would not love, who would not bless him?

Let us beg of our Guardian Angel to carry our prayers to the foot of the cradle of Jesus, to offer there our homage and adoration, until the happy time when we shall be united in heaven with all the celestial court, eternally singing the praises of our Saviour and our God.

SECOND POINT.

The ineffable mystery of the Incarnation is to the Angels a continual subject of praise, and of profound admiration; for never did the Divine perfections appear more brilliant, than in this mystery. They admire the Almighty power in the strict alliance of the Divine and human nature; they bless the mercy which decreed to save the world, by so great a benefit; they praise the infinite wisdom of Him who discovered the means of reconciling the sentiments of mercy, with the rights of justice; and their joy becomes unbounded when they find that the places which the rebel Angels had occupied in heaven, and forfeited by their pride, will be re-occupied, and heaven be peopled with the elect.

Oh! how happy should we be, if we were entirely occupied in praising God, and if, penetrated with gratitude at the remembrance of all his benefits, we employed, like the Royal Prophet, every moment of our lives, in blessing and loving him.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the Joy of Angels, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Divine Jesus! at thy birth heaven and earth rejoiced: heaven, because thou wert preparing for it new inhabitants: earth, because thou camest to deliver it from the servitude of sin. Let heaven and earth now unite in loving thee and celebrating thy mercies.

EXAMPLE.

A hermit, whose cell was distant from the spring whence he fetched water, was one day so fatigued by the distance which he had daily to traverse, that he said to himself, "Why should I give myself this trouble? it would be much more convenient for me to build my cell near the spring; I should not then have so far to walk." Whilst he was indulging these thoughts, he heard behind him a voice, counting each step as he proceeded; surprised at this, he looked back, but saw no one; he proceeded on his way and again heard the same voice; a second time he turned, but saw nothing. The same thing having occurred a third time, the hermit stopped, and saw near him a young man surrounded by a brilliant light, who said to him: "I am the Angel of God counting all your steps, in order that not one may pass unrewarded;" and having said this, he disappeared. On this, the hermit having given the matter his serious consideration, acknowledged and repented of his immortification, and instead of removing his cell nearer to the fountain, resolved to fix it at a still greater distance, in order to have more labour and more merit before God. Thus, our holy Guardian Angels enumerate our good works, and all that we do for God; and will one day ask for our reward from the Sovereign Judge.

PRACTICE.

Honour your holy Guardian Angel; in every place respect his presence, and beg of him to offer to the Infant Jesus your praises and your prayers.

NINTH DAY.

“Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace to men of good will.”

FIRST POINT.

If there be joy in heaven at the conversion of one sinner, what must have been the joy of the celestial host when the Son of God became man to destroy sin, to atone for the iniquity of mankind and to save the world? See how the holy Angels sent to announce the birth of the Saviour, hastened to entone this canticle of praise and love—“*Glory to God in the highest.*”

Let us also, prostrate in spirit at the foot of the cradle of the Infant Jesus, participate in the joy of the Angels; let us love to repeat with them and with the whole church, “*Glory to God in the highest.*” We praise thee, O Lord, we bless thee; we give thee thanks, O Father Almighty and merciful, for the inestimable benefit which thou hast bestowed upon us, in giving us thy Beloved Son. Oh Jesus! thou who camest to efface the sins of the world, have mercy on us; listen to our prayers; we acknowledge that thou only art holy, thou only art Lord of all things, the Son of the Most High, who reigneth with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father; praise, honour, and glory be thine for ever and ever.

SECOND POINT.

What is the peace which the Angels announced to the shepherds at the birth of our Saviour? It is that peace with God which is granted to us, through the merits of his Divine Son; for although it was in his passion, that Christ consummated

the work of our redemption, and reconciliation with God; yet it was necessary that this treaty of peace should be signed with his blood, and sealed with the seal of the cross; nevertheless, the offering and the acceptance were made before hand; Jesus from the first moment of his birth, submitted himself to the orders of God his Father, in accordance with the conditions required for the redemption of the world: "My Father," said he, "Thou hast not accepted the sacrifices of the Old Law; they could neither appease thy anger, nor satisfy thy justice; a victim is required worthy of thy infinite greatness; behold me ready to sacrifice myself to repair thy outraged glory, and to save the world." Psalm xxxix. The Eternal Father accepted the offering of his Beloved Son, and immediately the Angels announced to the world that peace was granted to *men of good will*.

This good will which God demands in order to render you participators in the peace which he promises, is a perfect conformity to his law; it is a holy fervour in his service; it is a sincere and generous love; it is, as St. Paul says, "Charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith." 1 Tim. i. 5. In consequence of which our will becomes submissive in all things to the will of God. But the will of God, says the same apostle, is, that we should labour for our sanctification, and that, since he has given us all that was most dear to him, in giving us his Beloved Son, as the price of our ransom, so should we also give to him that which is most dear to us, our hearts and our will.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the God of Peace, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

Oh Jesus! the God of Peace! Give us, we beseech thee, the peace of a good conscience, the delicious peace of virtue, the peace which is a foretaste of the happiness of the elect. Grant that we may carefully avoid all that which could cause us to lose this peace, and that we may have the greatest horror of sin, which brings remorse and sorrow into the soul; so that, after having passed our days in that peace which thou hast bestowed upon us in this world, we may also have a share in the unalterable peace of an ever blissful eternity.

EXAMPLE.

Collet d'Herbois, an impious madman, and the principal author of the massacre of Lyons in 1793, did not long enjoy the fruit of his crimes; the weight of God's justice, whose altars he had overthrown, and whose very existence he had denied, soon fell on his criminal head. Public opinion, which he had exasperated by his violence and disorders, could no longer endure his wickedness; he was condemned to exile, and banished to Cayenne, where he was surnamed "*The Butcher of religion and mankind.*"

Deeply agitated by this his new condition, he exclaimed, "God punishes me! the desolation which I experience is a hell." Meantime, he is attacked by an inflammatory fever; his conscience is aroused, and his crimes, the remembrance of which was insupportable, stood in full view before him! He called on God for assistance; "*Send me a comforter,*" he exclaimed, in the bitterness of his anguish, "Send to me some one who may

withdraw my eyes from the blazing flame which consumes me. O God! O God! give me peace!" But there is no peace for the wicked, sayeth the Holy Scripture.

A priest was sought for, but none could be found; he expired, violently agitated by the terrors of conscience, and the agonies of remorse!

PRACTICE.

Carefully avoid sin, if you wish to enjoy peace of conscience.

TENTH DAY.

"And after the Angels had departed, the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem; and let us see this word that has come to pass, which the Lord has showed to us.

"And they came with haste: and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in a manger."—Luke, ii. 15, 16.

FIRST POINT.

AFTER the shepherds had recovered from their first surprise, and heard the hymn of the Angels, they said one to another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem to assure ourselves of what has happened, and see the Lord who has been announced to us." They immediately set out, and arriving at Bethlehem found, as the Angel had told them, "Mary with Joseph, and the Infant lying in a manger."

Consider the promptitude with which the shepherds obeyed the voice of the Angel. "They came with haste" to the place whither they were directed. Nothing deterred them; they were to find their Saviour, the Messiah, so impatiently

expected for many ages. Oh! when shall we thus obey the voice of our conscience, and that grace which invites us to fly to Jesus, for he alone can cure the deep wounds which sin has made in our souls.

Oh Divine Infant! when shall I, by an entire renunciation of myself, begin to seek you with fervour? What means have you not given me to fly to you? When shall I have the courage to correspond faithfully with your Divine inspirations? I know, O Lord, that if I seek you sincerely, I shall find you, for you have said, "*Seek, and you shall find;*" but I also know that I shall never find you in the midst of those earthly pleasures and riches on which my heart is too much fixed; or in those culpable enjoyments which stain the soul; but I must seek you in the poverty of the stable and the manger, in mortification and penance, in the renunciation of self, and in perfect disengagement from the things of this world. Alas! nature is so weak that this terrifies and deters me. Oh Jesus! give me strength, I beseech thee, to overcome my weakness, and to break all those ties which keep me far from thee, that I may begin to seek thee by penance and love; and, having found thee, O grant that I may never be separated from thee.

SECOND POINT.

Consider with what faith and devotion the shepherds entered the stable of Bethlehem, with what respect they adored the Divine Infant.

What a happiness for them to see their Saviour! The presents they bring are only such as poverty

can afford, but they are more acceptable to Jesus than the richest treasures of the earth, because they are offered by pure and innocent hearts.

See the holy fervour which Jesus enkindles in the hearts of these good shepherds, and imagine how they would express their admiration and astonishment: "Behold," say they, "the Saviour so ardently desired by our forefathers. Alas! what poverty! Never shall we complain in future of our poverty; we shall prefer our cottages to the palaces of kings; we shall live happy and contented, rejoicing that we can live in a manner conformable to the condition of our Saviour."

Oh Holy Shepherds, obtain for me a share in that ardent love which consumes you, in order that I may adore and love with you this God and Saviour, who comes to visit us in his mercy.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the desired of nations, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

Infant Jesus, the joy and consolation of all who have the happiness to find thee, excite in my heart the most fervent desires to see and possess thee, that my soul may sigh day and night after the happiness of being united to thee.

For what can I desire in heaven, or what can I find on earth but thee? Art not thou my Sovereign good in time and eternity.

EXAMPLE.

The persecution commenced against the Christians by the Emperor Severus, extended its

ravages as far as Africa. At Carthage, several catechumens were arrested, amongst whom was Saint Perpetua. This admirable woman, who was descended from a noble family, in remaining faithful to her God, had to suffer the greatest assaults from the world and the devil. But our Lord consoled and strengthened her in the faith, by several visions. Let us listen to what she relates of the extraordinary graces with which God favoured her, as a preparation for martyrdom.

One day, when I was in prayer, said she, I saw a golden ladder of immense height, reaching from earth to heaven, but so narrow, that only one person could ascend at a time. Sharp swords and lances projected from each side, so that persons mounting carelessly, or without having their eyes constantly elevated, could not escape being wounded. At the foot of the ladder was a terrific dragon, which appeared ready to devour those who should attempt to ascend. The first who ascended was Satorus; he was not with us when we were arrested, but afterwards surrendered himself, in order to be able to console and strengthen us in the faith. When he reached the top of the ladder, he turned towards me, and said, "Perpetua, I await you; beware of the dragon." I replied, "I do not fear him, and I will ascend in the name of Jesus Christ." Then the dragon, as if terrified, turned away his head, upon which I placed my foot, making use of it as my first step. When I had reached the top of the ladder, I saw an immense garden, in the midst of which was seated a man of majestic aspect, with hair white as snow. He was dressed as a shepherd, milking his sheep; was surrounded by his flock, and an

innumerable multitude of persons clothed in white. On my appearance he called me by my name, and said, "My child, you are welcome"; at the same time he offered me some delicious food, which I received, joining my hands as a token of gratitude, and all that were present answered, Amen.

At this sound, I returned to myself, but continued to be sensible of the joy and strength imparted by the celestial nourishment.

I was convinced that I should suffer martyrdom, I began to detach my affections entirely from the earth, and to turn all my thoughts towards eternity.

PRACTICE.

Let us frequently think of the happiness which God reserves for us in heaven, and we shall despise the false pleasures and riches of this world.

ELEVENTH DAY.

"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard."—Luke, ii. 10.

FIRST POINT.

AFTER the shepherds had rendered homage to the Divine Infant, they returned to watch over their flocks; their hearts filled with gratitude and admiration at all they had seen and heard. Oh! how affecting, how delightful must it have been, to hear their simple recital of the wonders they had witnessed. With what pleasure would they speak of the beauty of the Holy Child, of the profound recollection of the Blessed Virgin, prostrate at the foot of the cradle of her Divine Son, and of the tender devotion of St. Joseph to the Holy

Child. Oh, how lovely! they exclaimed, is this Divine Saviour! how powerful are his attractions! Who could resist his charms! Who would not love him? What mildness was depicted on his brow! his countenance was more brilliant than the sun. Oh! how charming was the celestial concert of angels surrounding his cradle! with what eagerness did they serve the Holy Infant! with what profound veneration did they chant his praises!

And let us also, after the example of the shepherds, publish the infinite love of Jesus; let us teach those to know him who know him not! let us lead our brethren to the foot of his cradle; let us show them how lovely is our Divine Saviour, that being won by his attractions they may offer to him what he has so long demanded of them, and of which he is so jealous: their hearts, their love.

SECOND POINT.

Jesus did not summon into his presence the learned, nor the doctors of the law; it was not to these proud and presumptuous men that he manifested the inventions of his love, the admirable secrets of his wisdom. If they had related such wonders, the whole world would have believed that their aim was to obtain notoriety by their sublime visions; but who would think of contradicting humble shepherds in their artless recital? Their joy burst forth naturally, their account was devoid of artifice, every one was astonished to hear them relate the wonders which they had witnessed, with so much candour and simplicity. It is thus that thou art pleased, O my God! to

loosen and render eloquent the tongues of infants that they may publish thy glory and greatness: "*Ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem,*" "Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise," Psalm viii.: for thou lovest much the evidence of a pure and innocent heart, and receivest willingly the praises of a just and sincere soul, frequently confounding the pride of the learned by the simplicity of the ignorant.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the joy of the shepherds, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

Oh Holy Infant! the joy and happiness of all those who know thee, give us a heart to love thee, that we may publish every where thy infinite perfections, and thus enkindle in every heart, the fire of thy holy love.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the life of St. Vincent of Paul, whose name has rendered the French Church glorious, of the remarkable conversion of an apostate to whom he was sold during his captivity in Africa. This renegade had three wives, two of whom were Greek schismatics, and the third a Turk by birth and religion. The latter was the instrument which God used to lead back this unfortunate man to the religion which he had abandoned. Curious to become acquainted with the Christian religion, the influence and beauty of which she admired in the virtuous conduct of her slave, she frequently went into the fields where St. Vincent of Paul was working, and questioned him on the faith, customs and religious ceremonies of the Christians. She

requested him one day to sing the praises of the God whom he adored. His captivity reminded him of that of the children of Israel, and he began to chant the Psalm, "*Super flumina Babylonis:*" *By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept;* to which he added the *Salve Regina*. The Mahometan woman was much affected by the divine harmony of the Christian song; she returned home and bitterly reproached her husband for having abandoned a religion which appeared to her so sublime. The confused renegade could make no reply to his wife, but seized with horror at his apostacy, he went in search of St. Vincent of Paul, to concert with him the means of returning safely into France.

The saint was transported with joy at this conversion, and setting sail in a small boat, they crossed the Mediterranean, and after escaping a thousand dangers, they arrived safely at Aigues-Mortes, from whence they repaired to Avignon. There the renegade made his abjuration in presence of the vice-legate of the Pope; and the following year went to Rome, where he entered into a Convent of religious, who devoted themselves to the service of the destitute sick, and during the remainder of his life submitted to exemplary penance for his sins.

PRACTICE.

Edify your neighbour, and endeavour to lead him to God, by a holy conversation.

TWELFTH DAY.

“And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised.”—Luke, ii. 21.

FIRST POINT.

WHEN God chose Abraham to be the father of the faithful, he ordained circumcision as the sign of the covenant which he had made with him, and as the mark which should distinguish his descendants from all other nations.

Jesus, though infinitely just, willingly submitted to this law; he consented to bear the resemblance of sin as well as also to bear the punishment of it; it was his will to be placed in the rank of sinners, and to pass for a son of Adam like ourselves; for he did not come to exempt himself from the law, but to accomplish it in all its rigour. Admire the ardent charity which burns in the breast of this Divine Infant, and urges him to give us so great a proof of his love. From the eighth day of his birth, he began the office of Mediator and Saviour. Oh! how willingly did he shed that blood which was to purify our souls from every stain of sin! And what have you hitherto done to correspond with his love? You are not even willing to submit to the penance which your sins deserve; you fly mortification; you do not repress your irregular inclinations, or moderate your passions; you refuse to subject yourselves to the commands of God; you complain of the severity of his law—of the weight of his yoke; you wish that it should cost you nothing to gain heaven. Learn that there are only two ways of arriving at that happy place—viz., innocence or penance, and

that we must necessarily follow the one or the other to ensure our salvation.

SECOND POINT.

Jesus obeyed the law of circumcision in a spirit of rigour towards himself—of mercy and charity towards us.

If, in receiving circumcision, he rendered himself, as St. Paul says, subject to the law, it was in order to free us from so heavy a yoke, and to restore us to the holy liberty of the children of God. For he desires that we should serve him, not with fear and trembling, but with confidence and filial love.

Let us not, however, forget that Jesus, in freeing us from corporal circumcision, still imposes upon us the sweet obligation of circumcising ourselves spiritually, with the assistance of his grace, by an entire and perfect detachment from all our bad habits. Let us, then, beg of this Divine Saviour to assist us in correcting all our faults, to root out sin from our hearts, which produces only fruits of death, and this, in order that we may plant therein, those virtues which will produce abundant fruits for life eternal.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us !

PRAYER.

O Holy Infant ! thou who didst commence thy mournful and painful career by shedding thy blood to deliver us from the servitude of sin, do not permit that I should lose the merits of this adorable blood by my obstinacy and sin : but grant that by

mingling my tears with thy blood, they may form a salutary bath, wherein I may be purified from all my iniquities.

EXAMPLE.

A man who had passed a great part of his life in the pleasures and enjoyments of the world, was at length moved by the spirit of God, and entered a Monastery to do penance for his sins.

In the commencement of his noviciate, he was tormented by violent temptations. He experienced the greatest repugnance to partake of the food, and to wear the coarse habit of the community, remembering that in former days he had lived luxuriously and been sumptuously clothed.

The temptation became at length so strong, that he resolved to abandon the religious life, and return to the world. Before executing this project he threw himself on his knees before a crucifix. During his prayer he was favoured with a vision, in which he saw Jesus Christ, who enquired the cause of his affliction. When he had stated it, our Lord raising his arm, showed him the wound in his side, and said: "My son, place here your hand, receive some drops of the blood which flow from this wound; and whenever you want courage to do penance, or to impose upon yourself any austerity in expiation of your sins, contemplate my heart wounded for you, bathe your soul in the blood which flows from it, and I assure you nothing will ever seem hard or painful, but every thing will become easy and agreeable to you."

The man having returned to himself, felt himself endued with divine strength, and with courage superior to every trial; he gave up his intention

of quitting the religious life, and ever after evinced as much ardour and eagerness in the practice of penance and austerity as he had previously displayed for the diversions and pleasures of the world.

PRACTICE.

Let us support with patience and resignation, the trials and sufferings of the state of life in which Providence has placed us.

THIRTEENTH DAY.

“ His name was called Jesus, which was called by the Angel.”---Luke ii, 21.

FIRST POINT.

God, says the Apostle St. Paul, on account of the humiliations to which His Son submitted to redeem the world, *hath given him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, in earth, and in hell,* (Phil. ii, 9,) “ For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.”---Acts iv, 12.

Let us now consider all that is comprised in this adorable name of Jesus or Saviour. In it are comprised wisdom, holiness, mercy and the Almighty power of God, for without all these he could not have saved us; in it are united the different offices of master, physician, father, advocate, protector and pastor, qualities which belong to Jesus as being our Redeemer.

The adorable name of Jesus reminds us that our Divine Saviour has merited for us the remission

of our sins ; grace to overcome temptations, and to acquire virtues : it speaks to us of the sufferings and opprobrium which he endured for our salvation. Oh ! if such treasures are to be found in the sacred name of Jesus, who would not invoke it ? Ought we not frequently to pronounce it with lips burning with ardent love ; ought we not to engrave it on our hearts, and glory in proclaiming it to the world ? The holy name of Jesus pronounced with confidence and love, will be our defence in dangers, our refuge in perils, our hope in tempests, our support in trials, our victory in combats, our consolation in sufferings, our triumph in temptations.

SECOND POINT.

Let us consider the graces which flow from the adorable name of Jesus. This sacred name bears along with it all that is good. Are you sorrowful ? says St. Bernard, pronounce the name of Jesus and the purest joy will succeed to sorrow ; are you annoyed by the enemy of your salvation ? Pronounce this holy name, and the temptation will immediately cease. Does despair seize your soul at the sight of the enormity and multitude of your sins ? The name of Jesus will renew in it the sweetest hope. Does the grief of a remorseful conscience distract you ? Invoke the holy name of Jesus, and you will be relieved from the oppressive weight of your sins ; the most confiding and loving repentance will touch your heart, and the tears which flow from your eyes will be more consoling and agreeable than those criminal pleasures which rendered you guilty. Are you in a state of dangerous tepidity ? Invoke the name of Jesus, and Jesus will rekindle in your heart the

bright flame of that divine charity which was nearly extinguished. Are you wishful to preserve in your soul that holy fervour which helps you to walk forward boldly and generously in the way of salvation, and which makes the yoke of the Lord so light and agreeable? The name of Jesus will shed on your soul that ineffable unction which will re-animate your fervour and assist you to retain it.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, have mercy upon us !

PRAYER.

O, most Holy Infant Jesus ! thou seest the numerous enemies I have to combat ; I place all my confidence in thee, for thou alone canst save me ; discover to me the snares which are laid for my destruction, and assist me, by virtue of thy holy name, to triumph over all the temptations of the devil, and the seductions of the world ; for I know that the spirits of darkness are powerless against those who wear on their brow the holy name of Jesus.

EXAMPLE.

During the invasion of France and Italy by the Lombards, some soldiers who were in the neighbourhood of Nice, discovered an ancient ruined tower ; they entered it, and were greatly surprised to find therein an old hermit, named Hospitius. They supposed him to be a criminal, condemned to pass his life in this tower, and they were confirmed in this belief by the saint, who told them that he was loaded with numberless crimes. One of the soldiers immediately drew his sword to cut off his head ; but Hospitius having invoked the

holy name of Jesus, the arm of the soldier became suddenly paralyzed, and the sword fell from his hand. Struck at this prodigy, his comrades begged Hospitius to tell them what they must do to cure the unhappy man; but the saint, by making the sign of the cross, restored the arm to its former healthy state. The soldier acknowledged his sin, and the sanctity of Hospitius, he resolved not to leave him; and, bidding farewell to his companions, renounced the profession of arms, and all his worldly hopes; he embraced the religious life, and placed himself under the direction of the saint.

PRACTICE.

Invoke the holy name of Jesus in all your necessities, and in every danger.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

“His name was called Jesus.”—Luke, ii. 21.

FIRST POINT.

AND *I beheld*, says the Apostle St. John, *and lo! a Lamb stood on Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name written on their foreheads.*—Apoc. xiv. 1. The sacred name of Jesus is the sign which distinguishes the elect from those on whom the angel of darkness has imprinted the sign of ignominy and of reprobation. The elect wear it on the earth, as a token of the war which they have declared against the world, the flesh, and the devil; they wear it in heaven as the mark of their triumphant victory.

If, then, we wish to be numbered amongst them, we must glory like them in the holy name

of Jesus ; we must not fear to confess this sacred name before men, even should it cost us our lives. Blessed are they, says the Apostle St. Peter, who suffer persecution for the holy name of Jesus, for God and his Spirit resteth with them. The fury and malice of the enemies of our salvation need not cause us to fear, since we have received, says St. Paul, not only the grace to believe in the name of Jesus, but also strength to suffer for his glory, all sorts of torments, and power to triumph over all our enemies by means of this holy name.

This sacred name is also the terror of the devils, who tremble when we pronounce it with devotion ; their rage becomes powerless, and they are compelled to fly at the name of Jesus, by whom they have been totally subdued and disarmed.

SECOND POINT.

Let us open our hearts to Jesus that he may engrave his name upon them in imperishable characters. This holy name will purify our affections ; it will create in our souls sentiments of the most tender devotion. Let us beg of this Divine Saviour to imprint his name on our minds, that all our thoughts and words may tend to him as our last end ; let us conjure him to engrave it on our arms and on our hands, in order that all our works may be performed for his greater love and glory. The name of Jesus will give to our most common and ordinary actions an infinite merit, for Jesus himself has assured us, that a cup of cold water given in his name, will not pass away without a reward. Blessed be the holy name of Jesus now and for ever !

Oh! how much are those to be pitied who have no hope in this holy name, who take an impious joy in profaning it! Their misfortune is extreme; can we behold such conduct with indifference? Alas! it is not amongst heathens only that the name of Jesus is profaned, but also amongst Christians. Oh Jesus; those who blaspheme thy holy name are many, and they glory in their iniquity.

Arise, O Lord, judge thine own cause, chastise them according to the malice of their own wicked hearts; revenge the insults offered to thy holy name; or rather, O my Saviour and my God, teach them to understand the power and sweetness of thy holy name; that, submitting to the name of Jesus, and being consoled and enlightened by it, they may, from bitter persecutors, become zealous apostles of this adorable name.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the Fountain of Holy Love, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

Thou hast promised, O Holy Infant Jesus, that all which we ask for in thy name shall be granted to us; it is then in this sacred name that I ask for all the graces necessary to work out my salvation; give me, I beseech thee, O Jesus, thy holy love, that loving thee in this world with all my heart, with all my soul and strength, as thou hast commanded, I may also bless and love thee during a happy eternity.

EXAMPLE.

St. Ignatius, the martyr, had so ardent a love for Jesus Christ, that he imprinted the sacred

name of Jesus on his breast. When he found himself in any difficulty, or had any important affairs to transact, he always invoked with great confidence the holy name of Jesus, and speedily found the good effects of his confidence and love. My brethren, said he, to the faithful of Antioch, *believe my experience, nothing can resist the holy name of Jesus.* When he was led to Rome to be devoured by wild beasts, it was the name of Jesus he invoked in the combat which he had to sustain against the world and the devil, and it was by virtue of this holy name that he triumphed over his enemies, and obtained the palm of martyrdom.

PRACTICE.

Let us offer all our petitions to God, in the name of Jesus, and we shall most certainly be heard.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

“Behold there came Magi from the East, to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews?”—*Matt. ii. 1.*

FIRST POINT.

CONTEMPLATE the holy Infant in his humble crib; he is so lovely, that he attracts all to him; the angels descend from heaven to sing his praises; shepherds come to acknowledge him as the Messiah who could save the world; the Magi arrive from the East to offer their tribute of homage and adoration.

What is this power, hidden under the veils of infirmity and weakness, yet so great and attractive that none who approach can resist it? The at-

tractions of the holy Infant gain every heart. Will yours alone remain indifferent to his love? For a long time he has entreated you to return to him, and you have been deaf to his invitations. Ah! if to-day he sheds on your soul the light of his divine grace, harden not your heart; but listen to that voice of mercy and clemency which invites you to approach, and draw from the cradle of Jesus that bright flame of charity which he came to enkindle on earth, and which will lead you out of the darkness and obscurity of sin.

SECOND POINT.

How great ought to be your fidelity in obeying the voice of God, and corresponding with the graces he has given you! If the Magi had neglected the interior grace which incited them to seek Jesus, and to leave all to find him, they would never have possessed him; you must then seize the moment of grace; if you allow it to pass, it will perhaps never return; God will withdraw himself from you, because you listened not when he called; and he will abandon you to your own weakness. The treasures of divine mercy are now open to you; Jesus asks for your heart; he desires to break those bonds which keep you from him, and he wishes to dissipate the thick darkness which surrounds you; he wishes to lead you out of the dreadful region where sin and death everlasting reign; for this he enlightens you with his grace; hasten, then, to profit by it, lest you should for ever lose it.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the Splendour of the Father, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

Oh! Holy Infant! Splendour of the Father! by whom thou wert begotten from all eternity, be my guide in the difficult paths of virtue, that by the light of thy divine grace, I may discover and avoid all those snares which are laid for me by the enemy of my salvation, so that my feet may never wander from the safe but narrow path that leads to thee.

EXAMPLE.

St. Bernard, obedient to the inspirations of divine grace, resolved to withdraw from the world with his brothers, and worship God in retirement. On the day appointed for the execution of their design, they repaired to the Chateau des Fontaines, to bid adieu to their father, and obtain his blessing. They left with him their youngest brother Nivard to be the consolation and support of his old age. On leaving the paternal mansion, they perceived him playing with some other children. Adieu Nivard, said they, for the future you alone will be the heir of your father's wealth—we leave to you all our possessions. That is to say, replied the pious child, with a wisdom above his years, you take heaven for yourselves, and leave the earth to me; assuredly the division is not equal, and I shall soon follow you. Shortly afterwards he quitted the world to live with his brothers in solitude. Let us often think of this generous child, and imitate him by endeavouring to serve the Lord when he invites us to do so; for if we neglect the inspirations by which God calls upon us, a day will assuredly come when we shall seek and shall not find him, and shall perhaps die in our sins.

PRACTICE.

Let us profit by the grace which God bestows upon us, and be faithful in corresponding with the inspirations of his Holy spirit.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

“We have seen His star in the East, and we are come to adore Him.”—Matt. ii. 2.

FIRST POINT.

BEHOLD, amongst the Gentiles, the first fruits of the blood which Jesus shed in his circumcision: “*We have seen His star and we are come.*” What was there in this star more than in others, to announce to the Magi, the birth of the Saviour? Nothing, perhaps, extraordinary in the eyes of men blinded by passion, and led astray from the service of God. For this reason, out of the great number who saw it, only three profited by it; none but the Magi felt any desire for, or sought to know the way which it pointed out, therefore, none but they, had the happiness to find or to know Jesus.

Oh! how insensible are men! the love of earthly things entirely occupies their hearts; the affairs of this world absorb all their attention; they are led away by dissipation and pleasure; they forget their eternal interests, and bestow all their care on perishable wordly goods. Examine if you are not amongst the number of those who obstinately remain plunged in the dense darkness of sin; and if the grace of God should now enlighten you, close not your eyes to his Divine light; for

if you continue still attached to your wicked inclinations and irregular habits, you will neither find or know Jesus, who communicates himself to those only, whose souls are pure, and detached from the things of this world.

SECOND POINT.

Consider with what promptitude the Magi corresponded with the grace they had received; scarcely had they beheld the star, than they immediately set out to discover, and adore the King whom it announced to them; they left all that was most dear to them; they abandoned relatives, friends, and country, and exposed themselves fearlessly and cheerfully to all the inconveniences and dangers of a long and painful journey; counting as nothing their sufferings and fatigues, provided they found the Saviour whom they sought.

What a subject of confusion for us, O my God! whom thou hast for so long a time called to thy service! After witnessing wonders, a thousand times more numerous and brilliant than the star which appeared to the Magi, our faith is still feeble and languid. What frivolous pretexts and excuses do we not use when we are exhorted to pursue the faith, in which God wishes us to sanctify ourselves! How frequently do we stifle the reproaches of our conscience! Our indolence and negligence magnify the apparent difficulties in the practice of virtue; we see nothing but crosses, mortifications, privations, and sufferings. Oh! if we only once tasted the gift of God, and became sensible of the ineffable delights of his service, we should think but little of the violences and privations we must impose upon ourselves, in order to gain a knowledge and a love of him.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the desired of the Magi, have mercy on us !

PRAYER.

O Divine Infant, increase in me more and more, the desire of loving thee ; grant that I may continually seek after, until having happily found thee, I may exclaim with the spouse in the Canticles : " I have found him whom my soul loveth ; I have held him : and I will not let him go." *Inveni quem diligit anima mea, tenui eum nec dimittam.* (Cant. 3, 4.)

EXAMPLE.

Constantine the Great, when marching against Maxentius, the enemy of himself and of Christianity, saw in the heavens a brilliant cross, with this inscription, " In this shalt thou conquer."—Greatly astonished, he endeavoured to ascertain the meaning of this vision. On the following night, Jesus Christ appeared to him in a dream, and commanded him to have a standard made of the same form as the cross which he had seen. Constantine awoke and immediately issued the necessary orders. A few days after he gave battle to Maxentius, and having placed this miraculous standard at the head of his army, gained a brilliant victory. On the following day he entered Rome in triumph, and as a memorial of his gratitude, he caused to be inscribed on the pedestal of a statue which the senate had erected in his honour, and which represented him holding a cross in his hand, the following inscription : " By this salutary sign, the true emblem of courage, I have delivered

your city from the yoke of tyranny, and restored to the Roman senate and people their true glory."

PRACTICE.

Always be faithful in corresponding with the inspirations of grace, and frequently evince your gratitude to Almighty God for the assistance he gives you, in conquering the enemies of your salvation.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

"And King Herod hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem."—Matt. ii. 3.

FIRST POINT.

By a secret but adorable permission of God, the star which the Magi had seen in the East, and which had conducted them as far as Jerusalem, disappeared as soon as they had entered the city. They neither lost their hope nor were they discouraged at this trial; but going immediately to the palace of Herod, they asked him without hesitation, where they should find him who was born King of the Jews. At so unexpected a question, Herod was seized with fear; and the news having spread throughout Jerusalem, caused the greatest alarm.

What extraordinary faith in the Magi! See how it induced them to brave every danger in their search for the Holy Infant; they had no fear of alarming the ambition of Herod, nor of exposing themselves to the fury of his jealousy; they confided so faithfully in the powerful protection of God who had conducted them, that even

in the very palace of Herod they dared to interrogate him, as to the birth-place of the new-born King of the Jews. For, added they, "*We are come to adore him.*" When we truly love God, these are its proofs. We throw aside all the specious pretexts of human respect, all the false reasonings of worldly wisdom and prudence.

Oh! if we had not so frequently consulted this prudence of the flesh; if we had not so often feared what the world would say, we should long since have found the place where Jesus dwells, and where he delights to converse with the children of men; that is to say, casting aside all human considerations, we should have generously followed the vocation to which God hath called us.

SECOND POINT.

Consider what caused Herod's fear at the birth of our Saviour. He feared that this Divine Saviour would deprive him of his crown. Oh! what had he to fear? The kingdom of the new-born Infant was not of this world. Would he, who is the King of heaven, and who came to share his celestial kingdom with us, would he desire and seek after earthly crowns? But the princes and nobles of this world, jealous of their power, take umbrage at everything that appears likely to deprive them of it. Alas! the Holy Infant came not to reign but to serve; he came to give his life for the redemption of the world.

Let earthly sovereigns seek to extend their dominion, Jesus, the King of heaven, desires no other empire but that of our hearts: of our love only is he jealous, and it is that for which he ardently seeks.

Examine if, when he has demanded the possession of your heart to reign there as Sovereign Master, and to drive away its vices and its passions, you have not been terrified at the view of the sacrifice you must make; and if you have not been alarmed when he has told you, that in order to be entirely his, you must cast away those criminal affections which are so deeply rooted in your soul.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, our King and Lord, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

Oh Jesus! thou hast declared that thou wert born to be King, but that thou didst desire to reign in our hearts; take, I beseech thee, absolute possession of my soul, of all its affections and desires, so that all its powers may belong to thee alone, and contribute to serve and to glorify thee.

EXAMPLE.

During the persecution of Licinius, forty Christian soldiers were arrested in the city of Sebaste, in Armenia, and led before the Governor to be interrogated. Upon their refusal to obey the impious orders of the Emperor, the Governor condemned them to a novel and cruel death. It was winter, and a north wind blowing violently, he gave orders that the martyrs should be stripped of their clothes, and placed, during the night, on a frozen pond near the city: in order to expose them to greater temptation, he caused a warm bath to be prepared, in an adjacent gymnasium, for the reception of those who would renounce

Christianity, and adore the Gods of the empire. The holy martyrs joyfully encouraged each other, and united together in the following prayer: "O Lord, we are forty who are engaged in this combat, grant that we may be forty crowned, and that none may be wanting to this number." They were thus praying when they had the grief to see one of their number lose courage, and leave the frozen pond, to throw himself into the warm bath, and by renouncing his faith to lose the recompense due to his sufferings; for he no sooner entered the bath than he expired. A sentinel was warming himself near the bath, having been posted there to observe what passed, in order to give an account to the Governor, raising up his eyes, he saw angels descending from heaven, who distributed crowns to these generous martyrs, except to the one who had been overcome by temptation.

Struck by this vision, he immediately exclaimed, "*I am a Christian!*" and, throwing off his clothes, took the place of the apostate, and joined the thirty-nine who had persevered in the love of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding the severe and painful trial to which they had been exposed. Thus their prayer was heard, and forty were crowned in accordance with their pious petition.

PRACTICE.

Pray for perseverance, and never allow yourself to be discouraged by the trials of this life.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

“And behold the star which they had seen in the East, went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was.—Matt. ii. 9.

FIRST POINT.

As soon as the Magi learned from the doctors of the law, whom Herod had assembled, in order to consult them on this event, that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, they immediately left Jerusalem, and no sooner were they out of the city than the star reappeared. “*And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*” What a happiness was it for them to think that they would soon be in the presence of the Holy Infant, that in a short time they would behold him, and find a joyful termination to their long and painful journey. The nearer they approached Bethlehem the more their fervour increased, rejoicing that they should at length find Him, for the love of whom they had quitted all things.

When God tries a soul it is always by love. If he withdraws for some little time, the sweetness of his presence, it is only to excite our desires, to increase our fervour; and when he again visits us, his abundant consolations make us forget all our past sufferings. Jesus will reward all our efforts to please him, and if we persevere in daily prostrating ourselves at the foot of his cradle, he will be moved by our fidelity and fervour, he will grant us the grace to know and the happiness to love him. Let us often say to him with the Royal Prophet, “When, O God, shall I enjoy the delights of thy holy presence? My soul panteth after thee,

as the hart panteth after the fountains of water." In this land of exile, my tears shall be my bread day and night, until the bonds which retain me shall be broken, and without fear of losing, I shall for ever possess thee.

SECOND POINT.

Consider the place where the Magi found the Holy Infant Jesus, and their great astonishment on seeing the habitation chosen by the King of Kings. At the eastern extremity of Bethlehem, and not far from the walls, may yet be seen a rock, in an excavated portion of which, according to the custom of the country, a manger had been cut out. This was the place wherein our Saviour was born, and over this poor stable shone the star which conducted the Magi. At this signal they entered, and there found the Holy Child and his Mother. The simplicity of the place, the poverty of the Holy Family, did not disgust them; but prostrating themselves, they adored in this weak Infant the God Saviour of the universe.

Oh! blessed were the eyes worthy to see the Word made flesh, to contemplate the wisdom of the Eternal Father! Oh how lively was the faith of these holy beings! how fervent was their love! Jesus had already infused into their hearts the holy flame which consumes his own. What inexpressible happiness for the Magi! what abundant graces flow from the crib into the souls of these holy beings! They would not exchange their position for all the crowns this world could offer them; they behold, they possess Jesus. What more can they desire! Their fervent wishes are fully accomplished.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the joy of the Magi, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

Oh Jesus! the joy and happiness of all thy faithful servants, grant that I may never find any pleasure but in thee. If I possess thy love, I am rich enough; for what more can he desire, who, in loving thee, enjoys the sovereign good? I will then rejoice only in thee, and grieve at nothing but what may separate me from thee.

EXAMPLE.

A great prince visiting one of his favourites who was on his deathbed, offered to him, by way of consolation, all that was in his power, and promised to grant him whatever he should demand. The rich man asked him to relieve him from his sufferings, and to restore him to health. But the prince replied, that neither the one nor the other were in his power. How unfortunate I am! exclaimed the courtier, raising his eyes to heaven; why have I served, for so many years, a prince who can neither relieve my sufferings nor prolong my life? I promise that if my health be restored, I will serve no other master but the one who has dominion over sickness and death. His wishes were not fulfilled; for after the lapse of a few moments, he expired.

See, then, how the world rewards its followers. It is a hard and unreasonable master, keeping no account of what is done for it. Jesus Christ, on the contrary, tells us that our slightest actions, even a glass of cold water given in his name, shall

have its reward. Can there be a moment's hesitation, when we have to make our choice between these two masters?

PRACTICE.

Let us profit by the present time which God has given us to serve him and perform good works.

NINETEENTH DAY.

"And falling down, they adored him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh."—Matt. ii. 11.

FIRST POINT.

It was the custom of Eastern people never to present themselves before their princes or kings without offering them some present, as an acknowledgment of their sovereign dominion, and to pay them homage. For this reason the Magi, after having adored the Holy Infant, opened to him their treasures, and offered him gold, frankincense and myrrh. By offering incense they adored his divinity; by presenting gold they acknowledged his regal dignity; and by offering myrrh, they paid homage to his sacred humanity.

Join with these holy kings; adore with them this Holy Infant, as your God; acknowledge in him your King, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. The gold which you must offer him is that of ardent charity, of tender and generous love; love which will cause your prayers to ascend to heaven as sweet smelling incense. Add to these myrrh, that is to say, the sighs of a penitent heart,

for there is nothing more precious in the eyes of the Holy Infant, than a contrite and a humble heart. Say not you are devoid of virtue, that you have nothing to offer to your Saviour. If you have neither tears of affection nor of love, you have, at least, those of contrition and of penance.

However, be this as it may, open your heart to Jesus, beg of him to take all that he will condescend to accept of, or rather beg of him to deprive it of all that displeases or offends him; offer him all you possess, your soul, your body, your entire life, to be totally employed in his service.

SECOND POINT.

See with what sentiments of devotion, with what humility and love these holy kings approach the crib; see the Infant Jesus smiling at their caresses, and casting on them the benignant regards of mercy and of goodness which penetrate their hearts, and enkindle therein the ardent flames of divine love. Oh! how glorious, how honourable was it for the Magi to have so highly favoured an interview with Jesus! How willingly would they have passed their lives near the crib, with Jesus and with Mary! How sweet would be the communication, how delicious the converse of their souls with Jesus, is not in the power of human language to describe. Ah! if you would understand and enjoy such happiness, bring to the foot of the cradle a heart pure as theirs; present yourself to Jesus with the same virtues and as ardent a love; then Jesus will receive you with the same affection; should you have nothing to offer him but your good will, even with that he will be contented, and give you in return his peace, which surpasseth all understanding.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, Gift of the Father, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Holy Infant! Thou art the Sovereign Good, and I am the very extremity of misery. What can I give thee? I have nothing to offer thee, but thou hast much to give me. Thou camest on the earth to enrich me with thy blessings, grant me, I beseech thee, thy holy love, inspire me with a contempt for earthly things; assist me to leave all, in order that I may find the treasure which is unknown to the greatest part of mankind, but worth more than all the wealth of a thousand worlds.

EXAMPLE.

Saint Mary of Egypt did penance during more than forty-seven years in the desert, for the sins of her youth, and was endeavouring to satisfy divine justice by the most austere life, when, as if by a miracle, she met a recluse named Zozimus. The holy man at first took her to be a spectre, so greatly was she disfigured by the heat of the sun, and her great austerities, but the saint undeceived him by relating the history of her life and her long course of penance, and entreated him to bring her the Holy Eucharist in the following Lent. Zozimus promised to do so, and on Holy Thursday, taking with him the Blessed Sacrament in a chalice, he seated himself on the banks of the Jordan, awaiting the arrival of the saint. Scarcely had he arrived, when Mary appeared on the opposite side of the river. He was considering how

she would be able to pass over, when the saint, having made the sign of the cross, came to him, walking on the water. Astonished at this miracle, the holy man was going to prostrate himself before her, but she exclaimed: "What are you doing my Father? remember you are a Priest, and carry with you the Divine Mysteries." She then requested him to repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and after having received the Holy Communion, she begged him to return the following year. He did so, but found the saint dead and stretched on the sand: by her side was traced this inscription—"Abbot Zozimus, here bury the body of the poor sinner, and pray for her."

PRACTICE.

Let us approach the Holy Table with the same love and fervour, as that with which the Magi presented themselves at the cradle of our Lord.

TWENTIETH DAY.

"And being warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country."—Matt. ii, 12.

FIRST POINT.

AFTER the Magi had paid their homage and adoration to the Child Jesus, we are told they were warned, in a dream, not to return to Jerusalem, in order to give Herod the information he had requested regarding the Holy Infant; they, therefore, went back by another road into their own country.

It was the will of God thus to deceive and punish the ambitious policy of Herod, for although he had concealed his cruel designs from the knowledge of men, he could not hide from God the malice and corruption of his heart; and notwithstanding all his anxiety to discover the Infant Jesus, whom he considered as a dangerous rival, he could not succeed in obtaining possession of this innocent victim: for the hour fixed by the Eternal Father, in which Jesus would give his life for the salvation of the world had not yet arrived. Thus Almighty God, when it is his will, counteracts the designs of the wicked; and thus His Divine Providence watches over those who belong to him, to preserve them from the snare of their enemies.

Confide then implicitly in your Divine Saviour, he will watch over and enable you to avoid the snares of your enemies, teaching you to discover the malice and cunning of the devil, who, under the apparent benefits which he offers, to induce you to sin, skilfully hides the poison which is to ruin your soul, and veils from your view the abyss of evils into which he is about to hurry you.

Remember that, if you do not wish to fall into the snares of the enemy of your salvation, you must not follow the broad and beaten road of the world, but the narrow and difficult path trodden by the few: it is by this road only that you can arrive without danger at your true country.

SECOND POINT.

Reflect upon the sentiments which animated the Magi when they were on the point of leaving Jesus and Mary. They prostrated themselves at the feet of the Holy Infant, and bathed the crib

with their tears, feeling as if it were impossible to leave a God so amiable; they uttered a thousand thanks to him for having called them to himself, in preference to so many others who had not partaken of the same happiness: they promised the most inviolable fidelity and pledged to him a never dying love. Oh, how willingly would they have passed the remainder of their lives with Jesus and Mary! But, however great the joy they would have experienced by remaining in this holy society, they renounced it, that they might go and proclaim the wonders which they had witnessed, and announce to the Gentiles, the happy news of salvation, wishing to draw every heart to Jesus, and to lead all mankind to the foot of the cradle. Such is true love, true devotion, which does not exclusively attach itself to the consolations of piety, but willingly leaves the sweets of prayer to execute the divine commands: For whatever may be the pleasure you experience in your spiritual exercises, if the affection you have for them causes you to neglect the duties of your state of life, you are in the greatest delusion: whilst believing that you honour God, you offend him.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the delight of your Heavenly Father, have mercy on us.

PRAYER.

Oh Holy Infant! from whom nothing is hidden and who knows all the merciful designs of your Heavenly Father in my regard, teach me to know his holy will, in order that I may accomplish it in all things: for I know that my sanctification consists in a perfect conformity with this holy will,

since thou hast declared—“ *He who doeth the will of my Father, the same is my father, mother, sister, and brother.*”

EXAMPLE.

The Emperor Valens, a fanatical partizan of the Arians, wished to draw into this heresy, Basil, the Holy Bishop of Cæsara. He sent to him Modestus, Prefect of the East, with orders to gain him over by promises, or terrify him by threats. But nothing could shake the faith of the holy Bishop. The Prefect, irritated at his resistance, told him that he had reason to fear for the deprivation of his property, liberty, and even his life. Your threats do not terrify me, replied Basil: he who does not possess any thing, cannot fear the confiscation of his property; I have only a few books and some poor rags to cover me, and of these I do not think you will be envious. As to exile, you cannot inflict such a punishment on me, for the world is to me a place of banishment: heaven is my true country. I fear not torments, my body is so weak, that the first stroke inflicted upon me would terminate my existence and my sufferings; death would be to me a favour, since it would unite me to God, for whom alone I live. Modestus, inexpressibly astonished at this noble courage, exclaimed, that no one had ever dared to speak to him so boldly or resist so firmly. That is very possible, replied Basil, perhaps you have never before had such business to transact with a Bishop. The Prefect despairing of bringing him over to the Arian cause, returned to the Emperor: “ *You are conquered, my Lord,*” said he, “ *this man is equally above your promises and your threats.*”

PRACTICE.

Let us frequently ask of God the gift of Faith, in order that we may be able to resist all the attacks of the enemy of our salvation.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

“But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.”—Luke, ii. 19.

FIRST POINT.

I KNOW not whether it would be better to unite with Mary in her silence, or to endeavour to explain its merits. Oh! what could she not have said had she wished to speak! what wonders might she have revealed to the world! what ecstasies of love did she secretly enjoy in her soul! with what tenderness did her sacred heart silently unite itself to that of Jesus her divine son! Vainly would she have attempted to express the ardour of her love: therefore we are told, “Mary kept all these words and meditated on them in her heart.” In that august sanctuary she enjoyed such happiness as neither can be imagined or described; her spirit exulted with holy joy: “*Exultavit spiritus meus*”; and when she contemplated her God laid in the humble cradle, her love, admiration, and wonder reduced her to profound silence.

Let us imitate the interior silence of the Blessed Virgin; let us summon all the powers of our soul, and exclaim—“*Come, let us adore the Lord, for he is the good Shepherd, and we are the people of his pasture.*” Psalm xciv. Let us forget every

creature, for it is only in profound recollection that Jesus will speak to our hearts; that we can taste the sweets of his service, and enjoy the consolations which he sheds on the souls of those who meditate on his holy law; and at the foot of his cradle, contemplate his mercies and his love.

SECOND POINT.

Worldly advantages, personal qualities, or talents are only valued by the world, inasmuch as they are known and appreciated by it. It is not thus with the gifts which God bestows on the souls of those to whom he communicates himself; they are, in themselves, of inestimable value, and carry along with them a happiness which is most perfect, when restricted to communication between ourselves and God; the more they are unknown to men, the more precious are they to the humble and faithful soul. Thus the Blessed Virgin, in the contemplation of her lowliness, considered herself as the humble servant of God, although he had honoured her with the dignified title of his mother; she rejoiced and gloried not in herself, but in him alone, and her soul, overpowered with gratitude for the graces she had received, never ceased praising the mercies of the Lord, and blessing his holy name.

Love solitude and silence, fly from the conversation and from the dissipation of the world, retire to the stable of Bethlehem with Jesus and Mary; recall to mind the numberless benefits which God has bestowed upon you. Silently reflect on the graces he has given you—on the eternal love which he has exhibited towards you, and be assured, that in this solitude, Jesus will speak to

your heart; he will touch and change it, and you will then bless the mercies of that hidden God who communicates himself so generously to the humble and recollected soul.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the delight of your Holy Mother, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

Oh Holy Infant! chaste delight of your Holy Mother, is it possible that I should ever have felt weariness in your holy presence. Alas! O Lord, my heart entirely occupied with earthly things, has hitherto never experienced how lovely you are: now, however, hours pass away and appear but as a moment, when conversing with you; would that nothing should ever, in future, withdraw me from your holy presence, wherein alone true happiness and consolation are to be found.

EXAMPLE.

St. Antony, greatly afflicted at not being able to continue constantly in the holy exercise of prayer, begged of God to inspire him with what he ought to do. Scarcely had he finished his prayer, when he had the following vision: an angel appeared to him, and began to make a mat with the leaves of the palm tree; from time to time he interrupted his labour to converse with God; and after having thus several times mingled prayer and labour, he said to the saint: do the same thing and you will be saved. Antony never afterwards omitted this pious practice, or failed thus to sanctify his labour.

His love for prayer was so great, that he frequently spent the whole night in this holy exercise; and when the day interrupted the silence of his prayer, he would exclaim: "*Why comest thou, O sun, to distract me with thy rays, and deprive me of the true light*"? From this, we may form a judgment of the fervour and sublimity of his prayers.

PRACTICE.

Commence all your actions with prayer, and sanctify your labours by frequent holy aspirations.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

"They carried him [Jesus] to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord."—Luke, ii. 22.

FIRST POINT.

ALMIGHTY God, in order to perpetuate the memory of the miracle he had wrought, by exterminating, in one night, all the first-born of the Egyptians, had, by an inviolable law, commanded that all the first-born of his people should be consecrated to him; so that these children were not entirely at the disposal of their parents, or considered to belong to them, until they had been redeemed by the price ordained by the law. It was in obedience to this law that Mary and Joseph carried Jesus to Jerusalem to offer him to the Lord. Had there ever been an oblation more agreeable to God, or victim more worthy of his Divine Majesty? No others sacrifice had been so holy, nor had any victim so pure been presented

to the Lord. On this day was shed over the temple at Jerusalem, that glory which the prophet Aggeus had announced, when he declared that all the magnificence which Solomon had formerly displayed in this temple, was as nothing in comparison with that honour and glory which it would receive when the Desired of Nations should enter it.

Consider with what zeal the holy Infant Jesus offered himself in reparation for the outraged glory of God his Father : see with what love, he presented himself to be the victim of our iniquities, and to satisfy the divine justice, irritated by our sins : for we were present to his thoughts ; he compassionated our miseries, and immolated himself to cure our disorders.

SECOND POINT.

Since Jesus came to offer himself as a victim of propitiation for our sins, let us participate in his sacrifice ; let us, with him, entirely immolate ourselves ; the only means of rendering our sacrifice acceptable, is to unite it with his. Oh holy Infant ! I will not suffer that thou alone be sacrificed ; I offer myself ; what wouldst thou have me to do ? Behold me ready to present myself to God thy Father, as a holocaust, to be consumed by the fire of thy holy love, or as a victim of expiation, by the holy austerities of penance ; or rather as a peace offering of thanksgiving, in which my heart, filled with fervent gratitude, will incessantly exalt and praise thy mercies and blessings. I am resolved to devote myself entirely to thee. I offer and consecrate myself with thee, in thee, and by thee, to God thy Father. Grant, O holy Infant,

that this consecration may be irrevocable; that I may never desire to recover what I have once immolated, or seek to divide my heart between God and the world.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the offering of thy Holy Mother, have mercy on us !

PRAYER.

O Holy Infant ! the offering of thy Holy Mother to the Lord, accept also my offering by the hands of this good Mother. Can I have near thee a more powerful mediator? O most Holy Virgin ! you offered to God, on this day, all that was most dear and precious to you, Jesus, your beloved son. Through you, I desire also to consecrate myself to the Lord; you will be the guarantee of my promises, and the witness to my engagements. Mother most faithful ! obtain for me perseverance in that love which I now offer to your son.

EXAMPLE.

The following affecting incident is related in the life of the great Albuquerque, conqueror of the East Indies. During a violent tempest, in which his vessel was in the most imminent danger of shipwreck, and seeing himself on the eve of perishing, he took a young infant in his arms, and lifting it towards heaven, he presented it to God: Great God ! he exclaimed, if thou art irritated against us miserable sinners, at least have pity on this tender infant; and for the sake of its innocence, have mercy on us ! Immediately the tempest ceased, to the great consolation of those who were

on board the vessel, and who were expecting immediate death.

PRACTICE.

In every danger and necessity, let us thus offer Jesus to his heavenly Father, and oppose this pure and spotless Lamb to the Divine Justice which we have irritated by our sins.



TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

“There was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.”—Luke, ii. 25.

FIRST POINT.

WHEN Mary and Joseph carried Jesus to the temple in obedience to the law of God, the holy Simeon, who had been long expecting the Saviour of Israel, and who had received an assurance that he should not die until he had seen the promised Messiah, “came by the spirit into the temple.” Luke, ii. 27. By inspiration, he immediately recognised the Saviour of the world; and unable to repress his joy, he took the holy Infant in his arms, and blessed God, saying: “Now, O Lord, I shall leave this world in peace; for according to thy promise, my desires are fulfilled, and I have the happiness to behold him whom I have so long ardently expected. He will be the glory of thy people, the salvation of Israel, and a light to enlighten the nations seated in darkness and the shadow of death.

It is now time those chains should be broken which retain me in this land of exile, for my eyes,

after beholding the Holy of Holies, can never rest on earthly things: I will joyfully sleep in the peace of God,

“ Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace.”—Luke ii, 29.

Oh! when shall we be detached from this world like holy Simeon? When will God be the only object of our desires? When will our lives be so holy, that like him we can wish to be delivered from this prison, this body of sin, and rejoice like him in the expectation of a better life.

SECOND POINT.

When a soul has once enjoyed the delights of God's service, every thing else becomes wearisome and insipid: all that this world esteems, appears utterly contemptible; earthly pleasures and possessions become an overwhelming and insupportable burden; for God sheds, on the souls of those who serve him with fervour, such abundant consolations, that he who has once enjoyed them wishes for nothing but God, seeks none but God, desires only God; he would lose life a thousand times; he would renounce all the riches and honours this world could give, rather than be separated from this bountiful God, in whom he finds such inexpressible happiness. For this reason was the heart of holy Simeon filled with ineffable joy; he possessed his God, he beheld his Lord; he had nothing more to desire, for nothing could surpass the happiness he enjoyed in receiving into his arms the Desired of Nations; the expectation of the just, the salvation of Israel.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the expectation of the just, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Holy Infant! sweet hope of the just, thou art also my hope. I hope to see thee one day without veil or cloud, in the abode of thy glory. I hope to behold that adorable countenance which constitutes the happiness of the saints in heaven; and, after having adored and loved thee, as a weak infant, in this world, I hope to love and adore thee in heaven as the God of all Majesty, who livest and reignest through endless ages.

EXAMPLE.

Saint Monica, conversing, some little time before her death, with her son St. Augustine, on the happiness of heaven, they endeavoured to comprehend, by the light of faith, what that bliss would be, which is enjoyed by the saints throughout eternity. After acknowledging that all the riches and pleasures of this life could never be compared with the felicity which God reserves for his elect, they were suddenly favoured with a vision, in which, for a few moments, they beheld the abode of the blessed. Immovable with astonishment, for some time, they could only express their feelings by sighs and tears; then St. Monica exclaimed: O my son! there is now nothing that can attach me to this world; let us leave this strange land. What should I do upon earth now that my desires are fulfilled? I prayed for the prolongation of my days, only that I might see you a Catholic, and a submissive child of the

Church. God has granted even more than I desired, since I see you entirely consecrated to his service, and despising every worldly honour and advantage to which you might have aspired. What, then, is there to detain me longer in this exile? I have now but one desire, that I may speedily enjoy the ineffable delights of God's house.

The prayers of this holy widow were soon heard, for shortly afterwards she was summoned hence to receive the crown due to her merits and virtues.

PRACTICE.

Let us frequently excite ourselves to the practice of virtue by meditations on the reward which God reserves for his faithful servants in heaven.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

“Behold this child is set for the ruin, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted.”—Luke, ii. 34.

FIRST POINT.

I TREMBLE, O Holy Infant! when I hear the just Simeon declare to thy Blessed Mother that thou wilt be the occasion of the ruin of many, an object of contradiction, and of the cruel persecution of the world. Alas! why should I be astonished at this; thou hast declared that thou camest into this world not to bring peace, but a sword; to separate the son from his father, and the daughter from her mother. Matt. x. 34.

I now understand, O Lord! this sublime doctrine. Thou camest to declare war against the passions, and they are constantly rising in rebellion against thee; thou camest to combat the world, and the world hates and persecutes thee, for thou art the true light, and the world hates that light which displays the perversity of its works, and the corruption of its maxims. Thou wilt be the condemnation of the world, for thou wilt convince it of sin; thou wilt be the ruin of many wicked Christians who follow its maxims, because, having known the truth, they would not submit to it; their condemnation will be the more terrible, as their means of salvation have been more abundant.

Hadst thou not come, O Holy Infant, to teach them the true way, their sin would have been less; but since they have not believed thy divine words, or listened to thy voice; since they have despised thy counsels, and violated thy commandments, they will be severely punished; nothing can excuse or justify them at the tribunal of thy heavenly Father.

Oh Holy Infant! if it be true that I must be judged by the example thou hast set me, what will be my fate, I who am so unlike my Divine model? If I can only be admitted into the number of thy elect, in consequence of my imitation of thee, what well-grounded reasons have I not to fear for my salvation, unless I immediately endeavour to correct my faults.

SECOND POINT.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He who believeth in him shall live; for he came to give

us life; not merely the natural life, but the more precious life of grace and truth.

Therefore, if sin has brought death to our souls, let us go to Jesus, he will restore us to life. Were we buried in the tomb, plunged in the abyss of iniquity, at the voice of Jesus, death would surrender its victim, sin its slave: our bonds would be unloosed, our chains broken, our eyes would again open to the light, and we should commence a new life; over which, death and sin would no longer have dominion.

Oh holy Infant! when wilt thou effect this happy resurrection? Restore, O Lord, we beseech thee, restore life to our souls, which have been so long plunged in the darkness of death; for who can celebrate thy mercies or publish thy praises, in the region of death, or in the darkness of sin?

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the giver of life, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

Oh Jesus! who art our true life, grant that we may live only for thee, and that we may employ the remainder of our days in blessing, praising, and loving thee, so that we may at length attain that blissful life which will never end.

EXAMPLE.

St. Cyprian relates, that a Christian woman, who had eaten food consecrated to idols, had the assurance to present herself, after having done so, at the altar, to receive the Blessed Eucharist. But this communion, far from being to her the bread of life, became a deadly poison; for scarcely

had she received the body and blood of Jesus Christ, with a heart stained by sin, than she was seized with frightful convulsions, and fell dead in the sight of all present, who were extremely terrified at this dreadful punishment.

Let every one tremble, adds St. Cyprian, not at the punishment which was inflicted on this unfortunate woman, but at the punishment which he may himself deserve; let each of us prove ourselves before eating of this bread, or drinking of this cup, and let the chastisements, which God has inflicted on the profaners of his adorable body, serve as an example to us, that by sincere repentance we may satisfy the justice of the Lord, and avoid the divine vengeance.

PRACTICE.

Let us frequently beg of Jesus the grace to approach worthily to the Holy Communion, in order that the Blessed Eucharist, which is the source of life, may not, by our wicked dispositions, become to us the cause of death.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

“An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt.”—Matt. ii. 13.

FIRST POINT.

AFTER Mary and Joseph had fulfilled every thing regarding the Infant Jesus that was required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Nazareth. Scarcely had they arrived there, when the Angel

of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, and said: "Arise, take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt; for Herod will seek the child to destroy him." Joseph immediately arose, took the Infant and his mother, and went into Egypt.

Compassionate the sufferings and the inconveniences to which the Infant Jesus was thus exposed, on account of his tender age. During the long journey undertaken by the holy family, admire the obedience, patience, and humility of Joseph and Mary, and their perfect submission to the will of God under so great a trial. No sooner was the will of heaven made known to them, than they abandoned all things—their relatives, their friends, their humble possessions; neither did they evince the slightest hesitation, or even anxiety, as to their means of subsistence in a foreign country. Jesus was with them, and in him they possessed all things; he consoled them under every privation, and they trusted with perfect confidence in the care of Divine Providence, who never abandons those who trust in Him. This was their support and their hope; Jesus was their wealth, their only treasure; with him they wanted for nothing, feared nothing. Oh how affecting is the sight of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, leaving their country to fly from the persecution of Herod. What! the Sovereign Master of heaven and earth obliged to fly from a tyrant! Ah yes! he clothed himself with our humanity, and he must carry our infirmities; 'tis true he might have demanded from his father a legion of angels to defend him; but how then would the scriptures have been accomplished, which predicted this his exile by the words of the prophet Osée: "*Out of Egypt have I called my son.*" Google

SECOND POINT.

How different are the ways of God to those of men, and how opposite are His thoughts and judgments to those of the world! Adorable were the dispositions of providence in regard to Mary and Joseph! they were suddenly banished from the land of their father, obliged to suffer the sorrows of exile, and why? Because they had Jesus with them. Before they received this precious gift, they were living in poverty it is true, but they were happy, cheerfully labouring for their subsistence; as soon, however, as Jesus was given unto them, they do longer enjoyed repose, the world commenced its persecutions. Yes, the decree has been pronounced: all who will live with Jesus, must carry the cross and suffer persecution: "*Omnes qui pie volunt vivere in Christo Jesu, persecutionem patientur.*" "All who will live piously in Jesus Christ, must suffer persecution. (2 Tim. iii. 12.) It is the pledge of his love, it is by the cross that he rewards his faithful followers and servants. But there is such a comfort in this cross, so many consolations in this persecution, that one would prefer a thousand times to endure poverty and sufferings with Jesus, than to enjoy all the wealth and pleasures of this world without him.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, exiled from thy chosen people, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Holy Infant Jesus! who endured in thy most tender years all the hardships of exile that thou

mightest afterwards give thy life for the salvation of my soul, what can I do for thee? I will separate myself from creatures, I will exile myself from the world, in order that my life may be employed in thy service, and that in life and death I may be entirely thine.

EXAMPLE.

Under the persecution of Decius and Valerian, Saint Maximus, Bishop of Nola, being obliged to fly from the rage of the tyrants, left the care of his church to Saint Felix, whom he greatly loved for his many virtues. The zeal and sanctity of Felix soon attracted the notice and hatred of the persecutors, who caused him to be cruelly scourged and thrown into a horrible dungeon. But he was miraculously delivered by an angel, who appeared to him in his prison, and commanded him to leave it. The Saint immediately obeyed the voice of the angel, and, rising from the ground, the chains with which he had been loaded fell from him. The zeal of Felix, far from being weakened by the torments which he had suffered, had increased; he went through the streets of the city, exhorting the faithful to martyrdom, and strengthening them in the faith. The enraged persecutors constantly sought his life. One day they came to the place where he was preaching to the people; they were about to seize him when the Saint perceiving them, hid himself in an old building which was near. As it was open on all sides, they would soon have discovered him, if God had not concealed him from their fury by permitting a spider to form its web over the entrance to the ruin. The persecutors who followed him arrived

at the place, but seeing the spider's web, passed on, never imagining that any one could have gone in without breaking it. Thus, Almighty God, whose Divine Providence continually watches over his faithful servants, saved the life of Saint Felix by this miracle.

PRACTICE.

Abandon yourself with perfect confidence to the protection of Almighty God, who in his Divine Providence watches, with particular care, over all those who confide in him.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

"Then Herod, perceiving that he was deceived by the Magi, was exceeding angry."—Matt. ii, 16.

FIRST POINT.

AFTER having for some days expected the return of the Magi, Herod discovered that he had been deceived, and becoming furious, he commanded that all the male children of Bethlehem and the neighbourhood should be destroyed, imagining that the Infant Jesus could not escape; he even carried his cruelty so far as to cause his own son to be put to death. His orders having been executed with the most dreadful barbarity, his ambition and jealousy were satisfied; he easily persuaded himself, that having destroyed the child who was born to be King of the Jews, he had secured his crown, and had no longer any rival to fear.

How blind and how foolish is the malice of man when directed against God! How easily can the

Lord counteract all the projects of human prudence and wisdom. In vain did the powers of the earth unite to overturn the empire of Christ; the Eternal Father had given to him the sceptre of nations; and if he does not rule them by the mildness of his law, he will reign over them by the severity of his justice. For what is man when he revolts against the Almighty. He is but as the vessel of clay in the hands of the workman who has fashioned it, and who can again reduce it to dust at his will.

Insensate beings ! you who wish to cast off the yoke of the Lord ! who proudly say : We will not have him to reign over us. Remember that God laughs to scorn those weak boastings; the breath of his anger can in one moment utterly destroy you. Ah ! cease to rebel against your God, his patience and mercy have awaited you until now.

Take care lest his despised clemency be succeeded by a just vengeance which nothing can appease.

SECOND POINT.

Innocent blood flowed throughout Bethlehem; on all sides were heard the lamentations of desolate mothers, weeping over the massacre of their children. The cries of these tender victims resounded far and near, but moved not the ambitious heart of Herod; neither their innocence nor weakness could arrest his fury. Then were accomplished the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "*In Rama was a voice heard of lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*"

In reflecting on the cruel massacre of these innocent infants, who would not pity their fate, who would not lament their sufferings? Yet, how happy were they in shedding their blood for their God! O holy victims, whose lives were sacrificed to preserve the life of your Saviour, if your mothers, in this day of desolation and of grief, had known the profound mystery of Divine wisdom, instead of sighs and tears, they would have uttered cries of joy and gladness; they would have blessed the Lord who had selected you to render him so brilliant a testimony.

O desolate mothers, raise your eyes to heaven, see this innocent troop reposing in the bosom of Abraham, and rejoicing with their palms and their crowns on the mountain of the Lord.

O Holy Infant Jesus! when shall we also give you the testimony of our love, and offer you blood for blood, life for life.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the strength of martyrs, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Holy Infant! who desirest to nourish us with thy adorable body and precious blood, to strengthen us against the enemies of our salvation; thou seest our weakness, thou knowest our infirmities, and how frequently we have yielded to the attacks of our enemies; give us, we beseech thee, a more lively faith, and more ardent love, so that ceasing to fear those who can only destroy the body, we may fear and love none but thee, who alone canst destroy both body and soul in eternal fire.

EXAMPLE.

Julian, the apostate, in hatred of the Christian religion, wished, if possible, to prove the falsehood of our Saviour's prediction respecting the temple at Jerusalem, and undertook to rebuild it about three hundred years after its demolition by Titus. Alypius, of Antioch, was charged with the execution of the enterprise, and the governor of the province received orders to assist him. At these unhoped-for tidings, the Jews assembled from all quarters; they spared neither expense nor labour, and eagerly tore up the old foundations, in order to lay them anew.

Senseless fools! they did not see that in thus destroying the very foundations of the temple they were but concurring to verify what Christ had said: "*That there should not remain one stone upon another;*" for scarcely had they dug the new foundations than there was a dreadful earthquake; flames issued forth, burnt the workmen, and scattered and destroyed all the materials that had been collected. In vain did they several times obstinately endeavour to recommence the work; all who dared to approach were burned by this fire, enkindled by the vengeance of the Lord. At this striking miracle all were compelled to acknowledge the Almighty power of God, and the truth of the predictions of our Lord. They gave up this foolish enterprise, and were obliged to confess that the sentence had been pronounced from on high; and that in contending against it, man only displayed his own impotence and weakness.

PRACTICE.

Let us adhere, with unshaken attachment, to our Holy Faith; we know that the gates of hell will never prevail against it.

 TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

“Who arose and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt: And he was there until the death of Herod.”—Matt. ii. 14, 15.

FIRST POINT.

THE exile of the Holy Family continued until the death of Herod, when the angel again appeared to Joseph, and told him to take the child and his mother, and return to the land of Israel.

Consider the poverty and deprivation in which Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived during their sojourn in Egypt.

Unknown and despised because they were strangers, and in the midst of an idolatrous people, they had no one to comfort or assist them in their most pressing necessities; and the labour of Joseph was barely sufficient to supply the most urgent wants of the Holy Family. Yet they were contented in the midst of so many privations, and every day they blessed Divine Providence, whose designs they lovingly adored in all the sufferings and hardships of their exile. The presence of Jesus mitigated all their sorrows, and consoled them under all their sufferings.

Ah! if we wish to check the murmurs and complaints which continually rise in our hearts, when the Lord tries us by contradictions, priva-

tions, or sufferings, let us go to Jesus, let us take Jesus with us, he will lighten our miseries, he will calm our sorrows, he will share our sufferings, he will dry our tears, and put an end to our sighs; in a word, he will give us that perfect submission to the will of God, that entire dependence on Divine Providence, in which we shall find a remedy for all our evils, a mitigation of all our sufferings.

SECOND POINT.

Consider the zeal and love which enflamed the heart of Jesus, during his sojourn in Egypt. If the Apostle of Nations so ardently desired the conversion of Athens, when he beheld that great city plunged in idolatry, what must have been the sentiments of zeal and charity which animated the heart of Jesus on entering this country overspread with the darkness of error and of falsehood? Oh! how vehement were his desires!

Contemplate the ardent wishes which he felt to commence his Divine mission, in order to deliver the world from the slavery of sin; how he longed to enkindle in every heart, the noble fire of Divine charity, which he came to cast upon the earth! Who could comprehend the bitterness of the sorrow which overwhelemed him, when he saw the loss of so many souls whom he came to redeem, at the price of his own blood.

Alas! have not you also been to Jesus a subject of profound grief, when coming into your heart, he found himself, as it were, in a strange land, in a place of exile; when he discovered so many passions reigning, so many wicked inclinations, in the full and undisputed exercise of supreme

dominion. The spectacle of your soul abandoned to so many vices, and stained by so many crimes, was to him far more painful than that of those unfortunate people, groaning under the tyranny of the devil, for want of a knowledge of their God; if they had known him like you, they would doubtless have offered to him the homage and adoration which were his due.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the destroyer of Idols, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Jesus! who by the strength of thy Divine word, hast overthrown the idols of nations, destroyed their temples and their altars, come also into my heart to break down and destroy in it all those idols which I have raised, and to which I daily sacrifice all that is most dear to me, my soul, my eternity. It is done. O Lord, I renounce them; I desire no other God,—no other master but thee alone; reign in me, rule over my passions, and drive away those shameful vices which have become the possessors of my heart, to the prejudice of the love which I owe to thee.

EXAMPLE.

Julian, the Apostate, was one day sacrificing to Apollo, in a famous temple consecrated to this Pagan God, in the City of Antioch. The oracle which was accustomed to answer remained silent, and made no reply to the questions proposed by the Emperor. The astonished Julian demanded the reason; the oracle replied, that the neigh-

bourhood of the tomb of the martyr Babylas was displeasing to the god, who would not speak until it was removed. Julian immediately commanded the Christians to remove the body of the martyr, on which the faithful hastened to the church; and, forming a long and numerous procession, translated into another place the relics of the saint, singing hymns to the glory of the Most High, who thus manifested his power in the saints, by rendering dumb the false gods of the pagan. Let all those who adore idols be confounded, they exclaimed; let those who trust in them be covered with shame. Thus the body of the holy martyr Babylas was carried in triumph through the city, to the great confusion of the emperor and his pagan subjects, who were obliged to acknowledge the vanity and impotence of their idols.

During the following night, the anger of God was displayed in a visible manner, for lightning fell upon the temple of Apollo, and entirely destroyed it.

PRACTICE.

Let us be true Christians, and the world will not dare to attack us. Our virtues will cause it to blush, and will silence it.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

“And the child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in him.”—Luke, ii. 40.

FIRST POINT.

JESUS wished to submit, like other children, to the gradual progress of age; the Divine wisdom with which he was filled manifested itself only by degrees; and, although as St. Paul says, the plenitude of the divinity resided in him, and although he possessed all the knowledge of God, he evinced nothing that was not common to other children, or that could distinguish him from them. His modesty, his meekness, his recollection and silence, his obedience and submission, his application and assiduity in the labours enjoined him by St. Joseph, these were the marks by which he chose to show that the grace of God was in him, and that he was God himself.

On his countenance shone a sweet majesty which won every heart, and inspired all those who knew him with respect, adoration, and love; all was well regulated, simple and consistent in his actions and words; the Blessed Virgin never ceased contemplating her Divine Son; her attention never wandered from the beloved object of her affections; all her thoughts related to him, her heart as well as her eyes followed him every where.

What a delightful subject of meditation for so tender a mother! Ah! if you had Jesus always present to your mind, how perfect would be your actions, what treasures of merit you would amass

for eternity ! You would increase every day in wisdom before God and man, because the grace of God would be ever with you, to assist and strengthen you in the practice of virtue.

SECOND POINT.

Amiable Infant ! happy were they who beheld you in your infancy, extending your little arms, caressing your Holy Mother, and serving the holy old man to whom you had been given, and who had adopted you as his son. Happy are they who witnessed your first feeble steps, and heard your infant tongue lisp the praises of God your Father ! Who will recount to me the first words which you uttered !

I adore you divine Infant in the progress of age ; I adore you silently reposing in the arms of your tender Holy Mother ; I adore you subject to the same necessities as myself, through your love for me. requiring, as son of man, the necessary support for that sacred body, which was so soon to be immolated on the cross for my salvation.

Oh how lovely do you appear to me in the recreations and innocent joys of childhood ! Your mildness and affability, your submission to the commands of your Holy Mother, your tenderness and affection for her, all speak to my heart.

Oh my Jesus ! my greatest delight is to contemplate you, thus passing through all the gradations of infancy ! Assist me to become a child like you, in simplicity and perfect innocence.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the salvation of children, have mercy on us !

PRAYER.

Oh Jesus ! thou hast said that unless we become as little innocent children, we cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven ; how can we effect in ourselves so great a change ? Ah ! my Divine Saviour ! assist us so to imitate your virtues that we may draw from you a new life ; that thus being regenerated by the Holy Spirit, we may be your true children and be able with truth to call you Our Father.

EXAMPLE.

Boleslaus IV .King of Poland, caused the image of his father, for whose memory he entertained a great veneration, to be engraved on a plate of gold ; he always wore it, and when he was about to do or say anything of importance, he took the image, and kissing it, respectfully said : “ My father, let me not do anything unworthy of your name.” How much more reserved would Christians be in their words and actions, if wearing an image of Jesus crucified, they would, like this great king, look at it when on the point of staining their innocence by sin, and say with sincerity : “ Permit me not, O Divine Saviour, to do anything unworthy of the Christian name.”

PRACTICE.

Fix your eyes attentively on Jesus, and endeavour to imitate him in all your actions.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

“And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast :

“And when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem ; and his parents knew it not.”—Luke, ii., 42, 43.

FIRST POINT.

MARY and Joseph, faithful observers of the law, went every year to Jerusalem to celebrate the pasch. Thither they led the child Jesus, who was then twelve years old ; and when they had fulfilled all things, according to the law, they returned to Nazareth. As they travelled in different troops and companies, they felt no uneasiness respecting the Holy Child, although they did not see him, imagining that he might be with some of their relations or friends ; towards the evening, however, when the families reunited for the night, they discovered that the child Jesus had absented himself ; and in the greatest anxiety, set out to seek him.

How great would be the uneasiness of Mary and Joseph during their hasty return to Jerusalem ! How great would be the affliction of this good mother, at the loss of her Divine Son, the dearest object of her affections ! With what conflicting sentiments would her maternal heart be agitated ! She would remember the prediction of the Holy Simeon, that the *Child* would be an object of persecution, and that a sword of sorrow would pierce her own soul, on his account. “ Perhaps, said she, the hour fixed by the decrees of the Eternal Father has arrived ! Oh my Son ! my Son ! how willingly would I give my life to

save yours ! Who will restore to me this Blessed Son, who will enable me to find him ?”

Let us compassionate the affliction of the Blessed Virgin ; and if we wish that she should be pleased with the share we take in her sufferings, let us examine if we, on our part, have not lost Jesus by sin, perhaps without any sorrow or any effort to find him again by sincere penitence, and a true conversion ; in order to know this, let us consider how we love Jesus, and how we separate ourselves from him.

SECOND POINT.

We lose Jesus, when, like the Prodigal Son, we wander away from God our good Father by sin, to live in a distant country where we falsely imagine we shall find happiness by giving way to our passions ; we lose our God when we rush into the pleasures and dissipations of the world, and when we prefer its tumults to recollection and to retirement ; we lose the delights of God's presence, when we are not careful to avoid venial sins, or those slight imperfections which grieve the God of all sanctity, who cannot endure the least stain of sin in the soul of those who wish to devote themselves to his service.

Complain not then in future that you do not find God in prayer ; that he does not visit you with his consolations ; he has left you to punish your tepidity ; he has withdrawn himself to try your fidelity. Examine your conscience if it be stained by sin, weep, do penance, and Jesus will speedily console you, saying : *“ Many sins are forgiven you, because you have loved much.”* If

your conscience does not reproach you for any grievous sin, reanimate your fervour and generosity in the service of God ; and Jesus will soon bestow on you the enjoyments of his presence, and the delights of his holy love.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, the source of every grace, have mercy on us !

PRAYER.

O Divine Infant ! the source of every grace, grant us a share in those which thou has merited for us by thy sufferings and death, so that we may never have the misfortune to lose thee by committing sin, but that we may be always united to thee in time and eternity.

EXAMPLE.

The author of the Life of St. Pelagia relates that this celebrated penitent, some time before her conversion, passing one day through the City of Antioch, met on her way several bishops.

As she was one of the principal comedians of the city, she always appeared splendidly attired, and loaded with jewels.

The Bishops, in passing her, turned away their eyes, as from an object of great scandal, with the exception of one, who looked at her earnestly, to the great surprise of the others who reproached him for so doing. "I confess," replied he, "that I did look attentively at the woman, because I believe that she will one day be our condemnation, at the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge: for what time has she not spent in adorning herself that

she may appear to advantage in the eyes of the world! And how inexcusable are we, who serve the master of the world, and yet do so little to make ourselves agreeable in his eyes? Is it not shameful to see Christians much less anxious to please God, than worldlings are to please the world?" After speaking thus, the holy Bishop returned home, and spent the rest of the day in tears and prayer; and his prayers were so fervent that they obtained the conversion of Pelagia, who afterwards did exemplary penance for the sins of her youth.

PRACTICE.

Let us do for God what worldlings do for the world, and we shall soon be great saints.

THIRTIETH DAY.

"And after three days, they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions.

FIRST POINT.

After three days of the greatest anxiety, Mary and Joseph found the Holy Child in the Temple; seated with the doctors, listening to, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him speak, were astonished at the prudence and wisdom of his answers! What admirable eloquence would flow from his divine lips! what sweet unction was there not in his words! what modesty in his questions! what recollection in his exterior! All those who heard him, said among themselves, "*Never did man speak like him.*" John vii. 46. Thus did the holy King David, who had seen, in

his prophetic ecstasies, this Divine Messiah, exclaimed in the excess of his admiration: "Thy words are sweeter to me, O Lord, than honey or the honeycomb. They are as a light to enlighten and direct my steps in the darkness of this world; they are purer than gold seven times tried in the fire."

O Holy Child! condescend to be thyself our instructor and master; teach us how to conduct ourselves amid the dangers of this world, point out to us what path we must take to find thee, and how we may know and love thee; discover to us the beauties of thy holy law; assist us to comprehend the holy mysteries of thy infancy, and the secrets of thy love; or, at least give us the grace of submission towards those whom thou hast appointed to instruct us, so that we may listen to their voice as to thine, and thus thy divine word will produce in us abundant fruits for life eternal.

SECOND POINT.

As soon as the Blessed Virgin perceived her Divine Son in the Temple, amongst the doctors, her heart leaped with holy joy, and she could not refrain from tenderly complaining in these words: "My Son, why hast thou thus afflicted us?" But Jesus, concealing the tenderness which he felt for his mother, only replied: "*How is it that you sought me?* did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

By this Jesus teaches us that we must leave all in order to promote the glory of God; by this he condemns human respect, which frequently causes us to omit our most essential duties, rather than

displease certain persons; and he also shows us that we must sacrifice our most cherished earthly affections in order to accomplish the will of God, and to follow the vocation to which his Divine Providence has destined us.

Let us then, while there is time, cheerfully renounce all that prevents our giving ourselves generously to God, let us subdue all those natural but inordinate affections which captivate our hearts: for whilst thus bound down to this world, the Holy Spirit will never take possession of them, and we shall be always blind in reference to the things of God, languid in his love, and negligent in his service.

ASPIRATION.

Infant Jesus, master of the learned, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Holy Child! the doctor of nations, who hast enlightened and instructed them by thy divine wisdom, teach me also the science of the saints, point out to me the path of salvation; grant that I may be faithful in listening to thee, and thus merit the rewards promised to those who practice thy divine lessons.

EXAMPLE.

The pious missionary Charles Spinola, of the Society of Jesus, was driven one day by a furious tempest from the shores of Brazil to one of the American islands south of Mexico. Being obliged to disembark, he found the inhabitants plunged in every vice, and, owing to a want of priests to

instruct them, in utter ignorance of all the mysteries of the Catholic faith.

He resolved to remain with them some time, and his preaching soon produced wonderful conversions. He was accustomed to preach every morning, and when the hour of instruction approached, the poor islanders assembled together, saying: "Let us go and hear the holy priest whom God has sent for our conversion, for it was not the tempest but Divine Providence that conducted him to this island for the salvation of our souls." The word of God was so delightful to them, and made such a powerful impression on their hearts, that they declared, if a priest was sent to them but once in the year, to remind them of the instructions of the Holy Father, this would suffice to prevent them from relapsing into their former disorders. What a subject of shame for us, who so frequently hear the word of God without profiting by it!

PRACTICE.

Let us listen to the word of God with the greatest respect, and labour to reap the fruit of it in our souls.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."—Luke, ii. 51.

FIRST POINT.

CONSIDER the conduct of the child Jesus in his poor and humble house at Nazareth, leading a

hidden life, unknown to the world. His love of silence and of solitude were herein exemplified, and in contemplating this, human wisdom and worldly prudence are compelled to confess their ignorance, and to adore in silence. What! the Son of God; he who came to redeem the world, to pass thirty years of his life in silence and obscurity! What conversions might he not have made! What miracles might he not have wrought during this long space of time! How many souls might he not have gained by his Divine Word! Thus would human prudence and worldly wisdom reason, because they understand not the things of God. If Jesus passed the first years of his life in humble retirement and silence, it is to teach us that the most certain means of securing our salvation is to fly the world, and to be alone with God; for it is only in silence and solitude that God speaks to our souls.

The noise and tumult of the world prevent us hearing that interior voice which so frequently invites us to examine our hearts, that we may know ourselves, and labour for our salvation. Oh happy solitude! says St. Bernard, where we breathe a pure air, where God bestows upon us abundant graces, where he listens to our prayers and hears our vows! Who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may take my flight to the regions of true happiness, and repose.

Love, then, frequently to retire from the noise of the world, and remain alone with God; in his presence you will enjoy a happiness which you have perhaps never yet known, and you will then understand the mystery of the hidden life of Jesus.

SECOND POINT.

Jesus was subject to Mary and Joseph, and in what? In the humble exercise of a mechanic art.

Consider with respectful attention all the trifling details of the service which Jesus rendered to his family; see the holy eagerness with which he performs the duties enjoined him; look at his Divine hands occupied in common and rough labour; pause not on the exterior of this Holy Child, but penetrate to the loving dispositions of his heart; he complained not, nor was he disgusted with any occupation, but with a holy ardour performed the most humiliating offices: and as if the curse pronounced against our first parents weighed heavily on him, he endured all the rigour of this sentence: "Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow," wishing to be like us in all things but sin.

Oh how sweet would be our labour if we offered it to Jesus, and performed it in union with him! The most common and ordinary actions would then be meritorious before God, and we should sanctify ourselves by labour, for then all murmuring and impatience would cease; every one would be contented with the position in which God has placed him, blessing the designs of Divine Providence, and implicitly confiding all his interests to the direction of his Heavenly Father.

ASPIRATION.

Child Jesus, submissive to thy Holy Mother, have mercy on us!

PRAYER.

O Holy Child! obedient to thy Holy Mother in all things, assist me to renounce entirely my own will, that I may conform it in all things to thine, so that through love of thee, I may cheerfully condescend to do all that charity towards my neighbour requires of me.

EXAMPLE.

St. Maurus had been confided in his earliest youth to the care of St. Benedict, and made rapid progress in virtue under the direction of so wise a master, and so enlightened a guide. He distinguished himself amongst children of his own age, by his exactitude in fulfilling all his duties, and by his perfect submission to all that was required of him. The most profound humility and admirable simplicity were displayed in his character.

God recompensed his virtues by the gift of miracles. St. Benedict having one day ordered him to hasten to the assistance of the young Placidus, who had fallen into the lake whither he had gone to draw water, Maurus set out immediately, and without perceiving it walked upon the water, and saved the child who was on the point of drowning. When Placidus had recovered the effects of his accident, he attributed this miracle to the prayer of Saint Benedict, but the Saint who was well acquainted with the virtues and the sanctity of his disciple, attributed it to the prompt obedience of Saint Maurus. Thus it is that God delights to give his blessing to obedience, for the Holy Scripture teaches us that the obedient man will obtain the greatest victories over the enemies of his sal-

vation. *Vir obediens loquitur victorias.* Prov. xxi., 28.

PRACTICE.

Let us be obedient to those whom the Almighty has appointed to be our guides, and we shall never go astray.

LAST DAY.

CONSECRATION TO THE HOLY INFANT JESUS.

I COME, O Divine Infant, to prostrate myself before thy cradle, and to consecrate myself entirely to thee. I offer thee all the faculties of my soul, that they may be employed in loving and glorifying thee. I consecrate to thee my understanding, that thou mayest enlighten it with thy Divine light; my memory, that it may constantly remind me of thy infinite goodness, and the numberless graces which thou hast bestowed upon me.

I consecrate to thee my will, in order that being purified by the fire of thy holy love, it may be submissive to thee in all things; accept also the homage I have endeavoured to render thee during this month, which I have passed in honouring the mysteries of thy Holy Infancy; may I never forget the promises I have made, and the engagements into which I have entered, and which I now renew. O, my Divine Saviour! I wish, like thee, to love poverty, humility, and mortification; I desire to be submissive, obedient, recollected, modest; in a word, I would carry everywhere the sweet odour of thy virtues; so that the world might perceive the change which thy grace has

worked in me. I place these promises on thy holy altar, and at the foot of thy cradle. O, my Saviour, grant me thy grace to be always faithful to them. And you, O Blessed Virgin! Mother of Mercy! be witness of my consecration to your Divine Son. May this God Saviour, who was bestowed on me through you, receive me also by you! May your purity and innocence efface in his eyes the iniquities which have stained my soul! May the abundance of your merits and graces supply for my indigence and misery! O, most clement Mother, my Advocate and Mediatrice, present me, worthless though I am, to the Eternal Father; tell him that you have adopted me for your child; beg of him the salvation of my soul, in the name and by the merits of Jesus, your Divine Son, who cheerfully assumed a nature similar to mine, and became my brother, that I might share with him his celestial kingdom. Ah! if you will condescend, my good and tender Mother, thus to intercede for me, I have nothing more to fear, my salvation is certain: for who can so powerfully as you plead my cause before the Sovereign Judge, and obtain for me the pardon of my sins?

EXTRACT

FROM INSTRUCTIONS ON THE INDULGENCES ANNEXED TO THE DEVOTION OF THE HOLY INFANCY OF JESUS.

1st. A Plenary Indulgence is granted on the twenty-fifth of each month to those who shall devoutly perform the following exercise, in honour of the Infant Jesus, in a church, or public oratory, where it is practised, provided they confess, com-

municate, and also offer up prayers in accordance with the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff.

2nd. An Indulgence of three hundred days, on any other day in the year, if the same exercise be performed in private.

MYSTERIES OF THE HOLY INFANCY OF OUR LORD.

I.—INCARNATION.

V.—Incline unto my aid, O God!

R.—O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father, &c. Our Father, &c.

Most amiable Infant Jesus, who for our salvation descended from the bosom of thy Heavenly Father into the womb of a Virgin. and there took flesh like unto ours, and assumed the form of a slave, have mercy on us.

R.—Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us!

Hail Mary, &c.

II.—VISITATION.

V.—O most amiable Infant Jesus, who by the instrumentality of the Blessed Virgin thy Mother, didst visit Saint Elizabeth, and filled St. John the Baptist, thy precursor, with thy Holy Spirit, and sanctified him in the womb of his Mother, have mercy on us.

R.—Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail Mary, &c.

III.—EXPECTATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

V.—Most amiable Infant Jesus, confined during nine months in the womb of Mary, expected with the greatest eagerness by the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, and given by thy Celestial Father for the salvation of the world, have mercy on us.

R.—Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail Mary, &c.

IV.—NATIVIFY.

V.—Most amiable Infant Jesus, born of a Virgin Mother, at Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in a manger, and announced by shepherds, have mercy on us.

R.—Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail Mary, &c.

O Jesus, born of a Virgin, be for ever glorified with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

V.—Jesus Christ is nigh unto us.

R.—Come, let us adore him. Our Father, &c.

V.—CIRCUMCISION.

V. Most amiable Child Jesus, who, on the eighth day after thy birth, didst shed thy sacred blood in circumcision; didst receive the glorious name of Jesus, and didst fulfil the office of Saviour, by thy name, and the effusion of thy blood—have mercy on us.

R. Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail, Mary, &c.

VI.—ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

V. Most amiable Child Jesus, whose star directed the Magi to adore thee in the arms of thy Mother, and to offer thee mysterious presents of gold, incense, and myrrh—have mercy on us.

R. Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail, Mary, &c.

VII.—PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

V. Most amiable Child Jesus, presented in the temple by Mary, thy Mother, received into the arms of holy Simeon, and revealed to the people of Israel by Anna, the prophetess—have mercy on us.

R. Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail, Mary, &c.

VIII.—FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

V. Most amiable Child Jesus, sought by Herod, that he might destroy thee; carried with thy Mother into Egypt, by St. Joseph; saved from a cruel death, and glorified by the blood of the innocents—have mercy on us.

R. Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail, Mary, &c.

O Jesus, born of a Virgin, be for ever glorified with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

V. Jesus Christ has come amongst us.

R. Come, let us adore him. Our Father, &c.

IX.—SOJOURN IN EGYPT.

V. Most amiable Child Jesus, who lived seven years in Egypt with thy holy Mother and St. Joseph—have mercy on us.

R. Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail, Mary, &c.

X.—RETURN FROM EGYPT.

V. Most amiable Child Jesus, who returned from Egypt, and after enduring many fatigues in thy journey, entered the city of Nazareth—have mercy on us.

R. Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail, Mary, &c.

XL.—LIFE AT NAZARETH.

V. Most amiable Child Jesus, who dwelt in thy humble home at Nazareth, leading a most holy life, subject to Mary and Joseph, to the mortifications of labour, of suffering, and of poverty, but growing daily in grace—have mercy on us.

R. Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail, Mary, &c.

XII.—DISPUTATION WITH THE DOCTORS.

V. Most amiable Child Jesus, taken to Jerusalem at the age of twelve years; lost by thy parents; sought by them in great sorrow, and found by them on the third day, to their great joy, in the midst of the doctors—have mercy on us.

R. Have mercy on us, Child Jesus, have mercy on us! Hail, Mary, &c.

O Jesus, born of a virgin, be thou for ever glorified with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

V. Jesus Child is manifested to us.

R. Come, let us adore him. Our Father, &c.

V. And the world was made flesh. Alleluia.

R. And dwelt amongst us. Alleluia.

(The Alleluia is only said on Christmas Day and during the Octave. On the Epiphany and during the Octave.)

V. Christ is manifested to us. Alleluia.

R. Come, let us adore him.

PRAYER.

Almighty and eternal God, Lord of heaven and earth, thou who communicatest thyself to the little and the humble, grant us thy grace worthily to honour, and to imitate, in our conduct, the most holy mysteries of the infancy of thy Son Jesus ; so that, at length, we may arrive at the kingdom of heaven, which thou hast promised to the meek and humble of heart, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

 NOVENA

TO PREPARE FOR THE FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS.

Those who, during the nine days preceding the festival of Christmas, make a Novena as a preparation for it, by performing each day devoutly, and for this intention, some exercise of piety, will gain each day, three hundred day's indulgence, and a plenary indulgence on Christmas Day, or on any other day during the octave, on condition that they confess their sins, and receive the Holy Communion, &c. These indulgences are applicable to the souls in purgatory, and may be gained once more in the year, by making the same Novena in honour of the Holy Child Jesus. (Pius VII Aug. 2, 1845.)

The preceding exercise will serve for this Novena : these prayers have all been approved of by the Congregation of Rites.

NOTE.—An indulgence of several years was granted by Sextus the Fifth, in 1582, to those who confess their sins, and receive the Holy Communion on the Festival of Christmas, and who shall be present at some portion of the Divine Office.

 LITANY OF THE INFANT JESUS.

Lord, have mercy on us.
 Christ, have mercy on us.
 Lord, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.
 Infant Jesus, hear us.
 Infant Jesus, graciously hear us.
 God, the Father of heaven,
 God the Son, redeemer of the world,
 God the Holy Ghost,
 Holy Trinity, one God,
 Infant Jesus,
 Infant, true God,
 Infant, Son of the living God,
 Infant, Son of the Virgin Mary,
 Infant, begotten before the Morning Star,
 Infant, word made flesh,
 Infant, wisdom of the Father,
 Infant, purity of thy Mother,
 Infant, the only begotten Son of thy
 Father,
 Infant, first-born of thy Mother,
 Infant, image of thy Father,
 Infant, creator of thy Mother,
 Infant, splendour of thy Father,
 Infant, honour of thy Mother,
 Infant, equal to thy Father,
 Infant, subject to thy Mother,
 Infant, joy of thy Father,
 Infant, riches of thy Mother,
 Infant, the reward of thy Mother,
 Infant, gift of thy Father,
 Infant, offspring of a Virgin,
 Infant, creator of man,
 Infant, the power of God,
 Infant, our God,
 Infant, our Brother,
 Infant, going forth in glory,
 Infant, glorious in all thy ways,

Have mercy on us

Infant, mature even from thy childhood,
 Infant, endowed with the wisdom of age
 from thy very birth,
 Infant, father of ages,
 Infant, a few days old,
 Infant, giving life, and yet nourished at
 the breast,
 Infant, the eternal word, and yet making
 thyself dumb,
 Infant, weeping in the crib,
 Infant, wielding the lightning of heaven,
 Infant, the terror of hell,
 Infant, the joy of paradise,
 Infant, the dread of tyrants,
 Infant, desired by the Magi,
 Infant, exiled from thy people,
 Infant, being in exile,
 Infant, destroyer of idols,
 Infant, vindicator of the glory of thy Father,
 Infant, strong in weakness,
 Infant, powerful in abasement,
 Infant, treasurer of grace,
 Infant, fountain of love,
 Infant, restorer of the blessings of heaven,
 Infant, repairer of the evils of earth,
 Infant, head of the Angels,
 Infant, root of the Patriarchs,
 Infant, the word of the Prophets,
 Infant, the expectation of Nations,
 Infant, the joy of the Shepherds,
 Infant, the light of the Magi,
 Infant, the salvation of Children,
 Infant, the hope of the just.
 Infant, the teacher of the wise,
 Infant, first priest of all the Saints.

Have mercy on us.

Be merciful, *Spare us, O Infant Jesus,*

Be merciful, *Graciously hear us O Infant Jesus.*

From the bondage of the children of Adam,
 From the slavery of the Devil,
 From the corruption of the world,
 From the lust of the flesh,
 From the pride of life,
 From all immoderate curiosity,
 From blindness of understanding,
 From perversity of will,
 From our sins,
 Through thy most pure conception,
 Through thy most humble birth,
 Through thy tears,
 Through thy most painful circumcision,
 Through thy most glorious manifestation,
 Through thy most devout presentation,
 Through thy most innocent conversation,
 Through thy most divine life,
 Through thy poverty,
 Through thy sorrows,
 Through thy labours and travails.

Infant Jesus, relieve us.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *Hear us, O Infant Jesus.*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *Spare us, O Infant Jesus.*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *Have mercy on us, O Infant Jesus.*

Infant Jesus, hear us,

Infant Jesus, graciously hear us.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus, who didst vouchsafe so far to annihilate the greatness of thy incarnate divinity, and most sacred humanity, as to be born in time, and become a child, grant that we may acknowledge infinite wisdom in the silence of an Infant; power in weakness, and majesty in abasement: so that adoring thy humiliations on earth, we may contemplate thy glories in heaven. Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

May our Lord and Infant God hear us!

Now and for ever. Amen.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst ordain, that having been conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, circumcised, made manifest to the Gentiles, presented in the temple, carried into Egypt, to be there weaned and spend a portion of thy infancy, to return to Nazareth, and appear in Jerusalem as a prodigy of wisdom, in presence of the Jewish doctors, and who didst graciously receive the face of the world for the space of twelve years, by the mysteries of thy Divine Infancy; give us grace to venerate these mysteries, in such manner, as to become humble of heart, and, in all things, conformable, O Divine Infant to thy example! Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

In order to prepare the faithful to celebrate with worthy dispositions the birth of our Saviour, the following prayers, which may be recited during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, have been composed from the Anthems which the Church addresses to God, during the holy time of Advent.

PRAYERS

To be recited before and during Mass.

BEFORE MASS.

Let us ascend to the holy mountain of the Lord; let us enter the house of the God of Jacob, for there we shall learn how to walk in the paths of his love.

Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight the paths of our God.

When the Priest is at the foot of the Altar,

Prepare your heart that the Lord may enter with pleasure; dispose yourself to receive his grace by penance, contrition, and love.

Say the Confiteor with the Priest.

AT THE INTROIT.

Lord, open the heavens, and descend! Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just. Let our hearts open to his love, that Jesus may receive therein a new birth, by filling them with justice and charity.

AT THE KYRIE.

O Jesus, the Expectation and the Desire of Nations, I also await and desire to receive thee with all the fervour of my heart. We praise thee, we adore thee, O Lord God! Only Son of the Father, King of heaven. O thou who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!

AT THE COLLECT.

O Lord Jesus, who didst vouchsafe so far to annihilate the greatness of thy Incarnate Divinity, and most Sacred Humanity, as to be born in time and become a little child; grant that we may acknowledge Infinite Wisdom in the silence of an Infant; Power in weakness, and Majesty in abasement, so that adoring thy humiliations on earth, we may contemplate thy glories in heaven. Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

AT THE EPISTLE.

Be glad O daughter of Sion, and rejoice greatly O daughter of Jerusalem, for behold the Lord cometh. The glory of the Lord shall shine forth, and shall enlighten the eyes of his servants.

AT THE GOSPEL.

“O Wisdom, which hast proceeded from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end, strongly and sweetly disposing all things, come and teach us the way of prudence.”

O Divine, Eternal, Uncreated Wisdom! who camest out of the mouth of the Most High, to

manifest his will to men ; thou who reachest from end to end, mightily disposing all, and governing all with ineffable sweetness ; gaining the hardest hearts, and triumphing over the most rebellious wills, come and teach us the way that leads to thee.

AT THE CREED.

“ O Root of Jesse, who standest for a sign to the people, in whose presence kings shall shut their mouths, to whom the Gentiles shall pray, come and deliver us : do not delay.”

O Divine Root of Jesse ! Only Son of the living God ! who didst condescend to become the Son of David, the Son of Man, in order to save mankind, that all placing themselves under thy standard, and submitting to thy laws, thou mightest reign as sovereign master, and peaceful king over the whole world ; we consecrate and devote ourselves entirely to thy service ; and desire to be always remembered amongst thy faithful children and subjects.

AT THE OFFERTORY.

“ O Adonai, and Leader of the house of Israel, who didst appear to Moses, in the fire of the flaming bush, and gave him the law on Sinai, come and redeem us, with a stretched-out arm.”

O Sovereign Lord of all things, King of Kings ! Chief of the house of Israel, who didst appear to Moses in the burning bush, to teach us that thou art charity itself, and that the fire of thy Divine love should continually burn in our hearts, and consume all our imperfections ; come O Divine law-giver, stretch out thine all-powerful arm, and deliver us from death, sin, and hell.

AT THE MEMENTO.

“O King of the Gentiles and their desire, the corner stone, who maketh both one, come and save man, whom thou hast formed of the slime of the earth.”

O King of Nations! the corner stone, uniting by the strict bond of charity, all that is most opposite in appearance; mysterious stone, on which the Church is built, we pray that this Holy Church, our Mother, in accordance with thy promises, may be always victorious over error and falsehood, and that she may triumph over all the snares of her enemies and thine.

AT THE CANON.

“O Key of David, and sceptre of the house of Israel, who openest, and no man shutteth; who shuttest, and no man openeth, come and take out of prison him that is bound, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

O mysterious Key of David, who hast opened to us by thy merits, the gates of heaven, which sin had closed against us, grant us the grace of being one day admitted into that celestial abode, where with the saints and angels, we may ever love thee, and unceasingly sing thy praises.

AT THE ELEVATION.

“O Orient brightness of eternal light and Sun of justice, come and enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.”

O Jesus! brightness of eternal light, come to enlighten our darkness, to instruct our ignorance; the shades of death surround us on every side: open the eyes of our soul to the light of thy divine grace, in order that we may see how amiable thou art, and how deserving of all the affections of our hearts.

AT THE ELEVATION.

“O Holy of Holies! unspotted mirror of God’s majesty, and the image of his goodness; come, that our transgressions may cease—that sin may be abolished, and everlasting justice established.”

O Spotless Mirror of the majesty of God! perfect image of his goodness, thou whom the Angels incessantly love and contemplate, who can give us a heart worthy of thee? When shall we contemplate thy adorable face, and possess thee without fear of ever being deprived of thee?

AT THE COMMUNION.

“O Emmanuel, our king and law-giver! the expectation of the Gentiles, and their Saviour, come, and save us, O Lord our God.”

O Jesus! it is in this august mystery that we can give to thee the just title and glorious name Emmanuel. Thou wilt be with us in this adorable sacrament unto the consummation of all things: grant that we may, in mind and in heart, be always with thee.

AT THE ABLUTIONS.

“O Pastor of Israel, and ruler in the house of David, whose going forth is from the days of

eternity ; come, that thou mayest feed thy people in thy strength, and mayest reign in justice and in judgment."

O Pastor of Israel ! thou art truly the good Shepherd. O Jesus ! thou hast given thy life for thy sheep, and dost still nourish them with thine own flesh ; grant that we may employ our lives in loving and serving thee, and that we may say with the Apostle, " I live no longer, but Jesus liveth in me ; Jesus who has loved me even unto death."

AT THE POST COMMUNION.

Now dost thou dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace. Mine eyes have seen the Saviour whom thou hast given us, and whom thou hast destined to be manifested to all nations, to be the light to enlighten them, and the glory of thy people Israel.

THE LAST GOSPEL.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was made nothing that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men ; and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness to give testimony of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light. That was the true

light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. But as many as received him he gave them power to be made the Sons of God; to them that believe in his name, who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the *Word was made Flesh*, and dwelt among us, (and we saw his glory, the glory, as it were, of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

R.—Thanks be to God.

N.B.—The Translator has selected the following Hymns from the *Vesper Book*, judging them more suitable and better adapted for Music than those in the original.

HYMNS.

ADESTE FIDELES

Adeste Fidelis,
 Læti triumphantes ;
 Venite, venite in Bethlehem :
 Natum videte
 Regem angelorum :
 Venite adoremus
 Venite adoremus,
 Venite adoremus Dominum.

Deum de Deo,
 Lumen de lumine,
 Gestant Puellæ viscera :
 Deum verum,
 Genitum non factum ;
 Venite adoremus, &c.

Cantet nunc Io !
 Chorus angelorum :
 Cantet nunc aula cœlestium,
 Gloria,
 In excelsis Deo !
 Venite, &c.

Ergo qui natus
 Die hodierna,
 Jesu tibi sit gloria :
 Patris æterni
 Verbum caro factum !
 Venite, &c.

HYMNS.

ADESTE FIDELIS.

O come, all ye faithful,
 Raise the hymn of triumph ;
 Come, view your Saviour in Bethlehem :
 Born there, behold him !
 King of men and Angels.
 O come, let us adore him !
 O come, let us adore him !
 O come, let us adore him, our Lord and God.

The womb of the Virgin
 Bears him true God of God,
 And light of true light, though 'tis a child ;
 He is our true God,
 Not made, but begotten.
 O come, let us adore him, &c.

Sing, choirs of Angels !
 Rend the air in triumph,
 Loudly proclaiming the Saviour's praise :
 Give to our great God,
 Glory in the highest !
 O come, &c.

Thee, then, O Jesus !
 Born this day for sinners,
 Hail we with praises and glory due :
 Thou, the eternal—
 Father's word incarnate !
 O come, &c.

CREATOR ALME SIDERUM: FOR ADVENT.

Creator of the stars above,
 Eternal source of light and love ;
 Jesus, Redeemer, hear our prayer,
 May all thy free redemption share.

When man, by Satan's wiles deceived,
 His promise, fraught with death, believed ;
 The world thus lost, to gain and save,
 Thy love a rich redemption gave.

To free a world enslaved in guilt,
 Thy pure atoning blood is spilt ;
 Unsullied from the Virgin's womb,
 A victim to the cross and tomb.

When far resounds thy glorious fame,
 And heard is thy immortal name ;
 O Jesus, Saviour, God, to thee,
 Heaven, earth, and hell, shall bow the knee.

We deprecate thy dreadful ire,
 Thou that wilt judge the world by fire ;
 Defend us by the arms of grace,
 Assist us every foe to chase.

May honour, glory, praise be given,
 To God, the eternal king in heaven ;
 The Father, his co-equal son,
 And Holy Ghost in essence one.—Amen.

**JESU REDEMPTOR OMNIUM : FOR CHRISTMAS AND
THE CIRCUMCISION.**

Jesus, Redeemer! ere the light,
Born in transcendant glory bright ;
Effulgent thou, with equal beam,
Proceeding from thy sire supreme.

Thee, the great Father's light we know,
Eternal hope of all below ;
Regard our prayer, to thee we fly,
O hear thy suppliant servant's cry.

Remember, blest Creator, thou,
For our redemption once didst bow ;
Assuming to avert our doom,
Man's nature from the Virgin's womb.

This joyful day returns to prove
That miracle of boundless love ;
When, by the Father's only Son,
The world's salvation was begun.

Him, the bright stars, the earth, the sea,
And all beneath heaven's canopy ;
The author of our birth anew,
Praise with fresh hymns and glory due.

And we whom thy atoning blood
Has cleansed with pure redeeming flood ;
With songs on this thy natal day,
The tribute of our homage pay.

Jesus, of Virgin born, to thee
May praise and glory ever be ;
With Father and with Holy Ghost,
By men, and heaven's eternal host.— Amen.

FOR THE EPIPHANY.

Why cruel Herod dost thou fear,
Lest our great God and King appear ?
He who can heavenly crowns bestow,
Comes not to seize thy throne below.

The wise men followed that bright star,
Which shone to them in realms afar :
While light itself by light they seek,
Their gifts, their faith and love bespeak.

The heavenly Lamb the waters lave,
He sanctifies the crystal wave :
And he, whom sin could never stain,
Bids none upon our souls remain.

Behold a new display of might,
The pallied waters redden bright,
The mandate for the change once heard,
Wine flows obedient at the word.

Jesus, to Gentile kings displayed,
Glory to thee, and praise be paid,
With Father and with Holy Ghost,
Enthroned above the heavenly host.—Amen.

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

The thought of Jesus sweetly thrills,
Our hearts with joy ecstatic fills,
But sweetest above all, when we
Our Jesus face to face shall see.

No sweeter sound our voice can sing,
None can our ear more jocund bring;
None purer can our thought supply,
Than Jesus, Son of God Most High.

Jesus the contrite sinner's stay,
Thy bounty flows when suppliants pray:
To all who seek thee meek and kind,
But O how sweet to those who find!

Thy love the tongue can never speak,
The pen to write is far too weak;
He only who has loved thee well,
May feel, but ah, he cannot tell.

Jesus! be thou our joy, sweet Lord,
Our future crown, our high reward;
May all our bliss and glory be,
Through countless ages fixed in thee.—Amen.

Blessed be the name of the Lord.—Alleluia.
From henceforth now and for ever.—Alleluia.

READER,—If the practice of this Devotion has tended to console you in affliction, to assuage your fears, to strengthen your faith, to brighten your hope, or to enkindle in your heart a fervent love of your Infant and Divine Saviour, in your charity offer up the following prayer for the translator:—

Almighty God, bestow thy mercy on the translator of this book. Be thou her support, her hope, her consolation, and her reward. Fulfil such of her prayers as may be pleasing to thee: grant that she may fervently love thee; that she may live to thy honour and die in thy grace, through the merits of Jesus Christ thy Son.—Amen.

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